

THE EFFECT OF BLOGGERS' RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION



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**FACULTY OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND
ACCOUNTANCY
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TING MING

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT FOR THE
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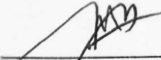
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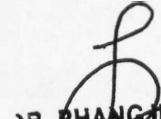

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I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries, and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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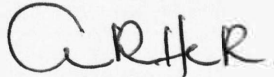
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ABSTRACT

This study is aim to examine the relationship between perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, information quality, and perceived benefit of bloggers' recommendations on consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendation. The mediating impact of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendation on the relationships between perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, information quality, and perceived benefits with purchase intention was also investigated. The target population of the study consists of respondents who have experience in reading blog articles from all demographic background. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 384 respondents by using proportionate stratified random sampling method in Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, and Sandakan. Results have demonstrated that perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, information quality, and perceived benefits have positive relationship with consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations. The study has also found that the mediation effect of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations was significant on the relationships between perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, information quality, and perceived benefits with purchase intention. Finally, the discussion on results and the contribution together with the limitation of the study are discussed.

Keywords: Blogging, Bloggers' Recommendations, Purchase Intention, Perceived Usefulness, Trustworthiness, Information Quality, Perceived Benefits, Consumer Behavior



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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara tanggapan kegunaan, kepercayaan, kualiti maklumat, dan tanggapan kebaikan dengan sikap pengguna terhadap cadangan blogger. Kesan pengantaraan sikap pengguna terhadap cadangan blogger pada hubungan antara tanggapan kegunaan, kepercayaan, kualiti maklumat, dan tanggapan kebaikan dengan niat pembelian juga dikaji dalam kajian ini. Responden kajian ini terdiri daripada responden dari semua latar belakang yang mempunyai pengalaman dalam membaca artikel dari blog. Seramai 384 borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada responden di Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, dan Sandakan dengan menggunakan kaedah persampelan berkadaran bestrata secara rawak. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tanggapan kegunaan, kepercayaan, kualiti maklumat, dan tanggapan kebaikan mempunyai hubungan yang positif dengan sikap pengguna terhadap cadangan blogger. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa kesan pengantaraan sikap pengguna terhadap cadangan blogger adalah signifikan pada hubungan antara tanggapan kegunaan, kepercayaan, kualiti maklumat, dan tanggapan kebaikan dengan niat pembelian pengguna. Akhir sekali, perbincangan mengenai keputusan dan sumbangan kajian ini bersama-sama dengan batasan dalam kajian telah dibincangkan.

Kata Kunci: Blog, Cadangan Blogger, Niat Pembelian, Tanggapan Kegunaan, Kepercayaan, Kualiti Maklumat, Tanggapan Kebaikan, Perangai Pengguna



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

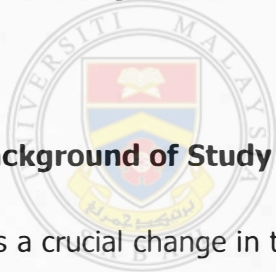
1.1 Introduction

This chapter comprised of the background of study, problem statement, research questions, and objectives as well as the scope and the significant of the study. Lastly, the important key terms that have been used in this study were defined. Basic understanding about this study was addressed in this chapter.

1.2 Background of Study

Web 2.0 is a crucial change in the way digital information is produced, shared, kept, dispersed, and controlled. With the introduction of Web 2.0, users are now allowed to compile, edit, alter, and exchange the information, rather than browsing, gathering, and retrieving information (Wolcott, 2007). Therefore, the content of Web 2.0 is more users generated. According to Kemp (2016), total internet users in the world are 3.419 billion with 46 percent of penetration rate over the total population of 7.395 billion. In Malaysia, according to UNICEF (2014), the percentage of household in Malaysia with the access to internet had grown from 15.2 percent to 61.4 percent in the period of 2005 to 2011. Nowadays, Malaysia has 20.62 million of active internet users that is 68 percent of penetration rate over the total population of 30.54 million. Every day, 77 percent of Malaysian uses the internet (Kemp, 2016).

From the high number of internet users around the world, active social media users in the world are 2.307 billion that is 31 percent of penetration rate over the total population. There was 10 percent growth in the number of active



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social media users compared to January 2015. In Malaysia, active social media users are 18 million with the penetration rate of 59 percent. The growth in the number of active social media users in Malaysia is 7 percent from January 2015 to January 2016 (Kemp, 2016). Ioanas and Stoica (2014) defined social networks as websites that bridge million of users across the globe with similar hobbies and interests as well as views. For instance, Blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and Facebook are the examples of social media that are highly adopted by all level of consumers (Sin, Nor, & Al-Agaga, 2012).

Among the social media platforms, blog is one of the famous and popular social media tool among internet users. Blogging has become one of the most popular mediums for recording, discussing personal feelings, ideas, and opinions related to particular events in daily life (Hsu, Lin, & Chiang, 2013). Blog uses has grown rapidly throughout the world due to it user friendly interface and many people engage in blogging to express and share their feelings and opinions as well as interests. It has become an essential part in many people's life. According to UNICEF (2014), Malaysia accounts for 2.9 percent and 2.7 percent of global users of Blogspot and Blogger respectively. Both of these are the top ten most visited websites in Malaysia. In Taiwan, blog is the most efficient and useful ways to follow the trends of the world among the existing social media (Wu & Lee, 2012).

Blogs have become very popular among writers, readers, and marketers (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Blogging has becoming a very powerful and influential marketing tool and is being integrated with existing marketing campaigns as a supportive element. When used by fashion retailers, blog represents a multitude of new strategies for that it is effective in capturing existing and new potential customers (Schertler, Kreunen, & Brinkmann, 2014). Blogs have become an importance medium for information communication and choosing suitable yet effective blog types to promote products have become an important issue in corporate advertising nowadays (Ho, Chiu, Chen, & Papazafeiropoulou, 2015). Aside from traditional coverage in the daily and business press, many major companies have also engaged in blogging and other types of social media (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Through blogs, individuals and businesses can know more about the existing and potential consumers. Blogs can invite the existing and

potential consumers to share their opinions and inform them about the latest news of the company and products as well as promotions (Sin et al., 2012).

Moreover, people also often blog their opinions and comments on a product or service after the use of the product or service. It is a medium for businesses and individuals to share their views and opinions with other people (Halvorsen, Hoffmann, Coste-Maniere, & Stankeviciute, 2013). These bloggers' opinions have greatly influence the purchase intention of consumers of the products they have blogged on and blogging obviously has become an important element before making a purchase decision. Bloggers' recommendations on blogs can create a great marketing impact in reaching consumers (Hsu et al., 2013). According to Wu and Lee (2012), smart bloggers with high popularity may attract more visitors to view the page in a day than even the biggest newspaper circulation. People often search for information online and read for product review before buying a product and most reviewers will use blogs, BBS stations, shopping communities, and professional review websites to examine information and posting comments. Through the reviews of products or services that used, consumers can affect other buyers by using social media (Ioanas & Stoica, 2014). Therefore, bloggers' recommendations on a product can affect consumers purchase intention towards the product.

In addition, bloggers' recommendation is a type of online product reviews which is a type of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) too (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). These reviews are written by consumers and many consumers depend on online product reviews to make purchase decision (Jimenez & Mendoza, 2013). Consumers are engage in eWOM communication such as organization-sponsored websites, message boards, blogs, chat rooms, and discussion forums on Social Network Sites (SNS) like MySpace and Facebook to share and exchange opinions and experiences about products and services (Pan & Chiou, 2011). These consumer generated information provides indirect experiences of products and is very useful in making purchase decision (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007).

1.3 Problem Statement

Social media has become very popular nowadays and even adopted by marketers as one of their advertising tools to promote products or services and to engage with their consumers and audiences. Studies have shown that the influential power of social media on consumer is undeniable (Kim & Ko, 2012; Ioanas & Stoica, 2014; Hajli, 2014) and consumers often use social media to share their opinions or views on products or services after the usage of the products or services (Hsu et al., 2013). Many consumers seek information of products and services from social media websites and rely heavily on online product reviews which are a type of eWOM (Jimenez & Mendoza, 2013). These online product reviews have greatly affect consumer purchase intention. According to Casalo, Flavian, and Guinaliu (2011), recommendations and reviews in the online travel communities have greatly altered the behavior of consumers because these recommendations and reviews written by travelers are perceived as fair and just.

Many studies have been done on the influence of social media and online products reviews or eWOM toward purchase intentions but not specifically on the influence of blogs. Blog is a type of social media and blogger's recommendation is a type of eWOM (Brown, Barry, Dacin, Gunst, 2005; Osman, Yearwood, & Vamplew, 2009). The effect of bloggers' recommendations on consumer purchase intentions has rarely been investigated. Several studies have shown that the opinions and recommendation posts of bloggers on the products and services will affect the purchase intention of consumers (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011; Halvorsen et al., 2013; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Bloggers have great influential power on consumers and therefore, there is a need to deepen the research in this area.

In addition, few studies have also demonstrated that consumers' attitudes toward bloggers' recommendations have effects on their purchase intentions (Hsu et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2014). Nevertheless, these studies were carried out in the context of Taiwan because blog is one of the popular social media used by the Taiwanese. As stated by Wu and Lee (2012), blog is the most efficient and useful ways to follow the trends of the world among the existing social media in Taiwan. These studies have contributed in understanding the effects of blogs but the findings remain questionable outside the context of Taiwan. As suggested by Hsu

et al. (2013), different countries have different lifestyle and culture. Leidner and Kayworth (2006) has also stated that the usage of IT will be influenced by culture. Therefore, do consumers in other nations such as Malaysia behaves in the same way as the findings in Taiwan are needed to be investigated and studied.

According to UNICEF (2014), it is hard to find statistics about the exact number of users of different blogging platforms in Malaysia. A blogger who owns an award-winning travel blog site, David (2015) has stated that bloggers are non-mainstream in Malaysia and they are still at the early stage of development. This manifests that marketers and consumers in Malaysia are not fully aware of the influential power of blogs. Hence, this study is necessary to provide an understanding on the effect of bloggers' recommendations toward consumer purchase intention in the context of Malaysia.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of bloggers' recommendations on consumer purchase intention with several factors, which are perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, information quality, and perceived benefits. It is also to examine the influence of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations on consumer purchase intention.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as below:

- i. Does perceived usefulness influence consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations?
- ii. Does trustworthiness influence consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations?
- iii. Does information quality influence consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations?
- iv. Does perceived benefits influence consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations?
- v. Does attitude towards bloggers' recommendations influences consumer purchase intention?

- vi. Does consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations mediate the relationship between perceived usefulness and consumer purchase intention?
- vii. Does consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and consumer purchase intention?
- viii. Does consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations mediate the relationship between information quality and consumer purchase intention?
- ix. Does consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations mediate the relationship between perceived benefits and consumer purchase intention?

1.5 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as below:

- i. To examine the influences of perceived usefulness on consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations.
- ii. To examine the influences of trustworthiness on consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations.
- iii. To examine the influences of information quality on consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations.
- iv. To examine the influences of perceived benefits on consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations.
- v. To examine the influences between consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations and purchase intention.
- vi. To examine the mediation effect of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations between perceived usefulness and consumer purchase intention.
- vii. To examine the mediation effect of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations between trustworthiness and consumer purchase intention.
- viii. To examine the mediation effect of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations between information quality and consumer purchase intention.

- ix. To examine the mediation effect of consumer attitude towards bloggers' recommendations between perceived benefits and consumer purchase intention.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study was conducted in three districts of Sabah which are Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, and Sandakan because these districts have the highest population number (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). Sabah is ranked nine in the penetration rate of broadband among the states in Malaysia too (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016). The population of the study consists of respondents who have experience in reading blog articles from all demographic background. Questionnaires were distributed to 384 respondents using proportionate stratified random sampling method. This quantitative study used cross sectional study in order to test the relationship between independent variables (perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, information quality, and perceived benefits), mediating variable (attitude towards bloggers' recommendations), and dependent variable (purchase intention).

1.7 Significance of the Study

The main contribution of this study is to provide understanding of the effect of bloggers' recommendations toward consumer purchase intention in Malaysia to marketers and researchers. This study helps to identify the factors that will influence consumers in Malaysia to adopt blogger's recommendations which in turn affect their purchase intention of the products recommended by bloggers. This helps to add up the knowledge of researchers on the effect of bloggers' recommendations toward consumer purchase intention in multiracial country like Malaysia.

For marketers, this study helps to provide an understanding on the influential power of blog as a type of advertising tool. By knowing the effect of bloggers' recommendations on consumer purchase intention, marketers can