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## Is the Purchasing Behavior of Suburban Millennials Affected by Social Media Marketing? Empirical Evidence from Malaysia

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**Abstract:** An abundance of social media marketing research has been conducted on urban consumers, but notably, only a few attempts have been made in understanding suburban consumers, especially on low involvement products. Due to this lack of research, this study aims to understand how social media marketing influences online purchasing behavior of Millennials in suburban areas of low involvement products. This study adapts the theory of uses and gratification to justify online purchasing behavior among Millennials. This study also seeks to understand the role of consumer engagement as a moderator. A total of 384 respondents, aged between 18-35 years old who have experience purchasing low involvement products through online websites took part in this study. The results indicated that three (3) social media marketing dimensions, namely online communities, entertainment, and perceived trust, had significant effects on the Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. However, consumer engagement did not moderate the relationship between social media marketing dimensions and the online purchasing behavior of Millennials regarding low involvement products. This study contributes to the integration of two new dimensions, namely entertainment and perceived trust in the concept of social media marketing. The findings have supported the uses and gratification theory, whereby Millennials in suburban areas inclined to choose their favorite online websites to fulfill their needs and wants. This finding also helped marketing managers to design their websites to cater to the unique trends of Millennials. Apart from that, this study also contributes to the marketing literature in relation to the space of low involvement products, consumer engagement, and Millennials' online purchasing behavior.

**Keywords:** online purchasing behavior, low involvement products, Malaysian e-commerce, social media marketing, consumer engagement, uses and gratification theory

## Introduction

Notably, purchase intention has been widely investigated in the marketing literature, for example, in the studies of Darsono and Huarng (2015), Harshini (2015), Kosarizadeh and Hamdi (2015), Sharifi fard et al. (2016), Hajli et al. (2017), Sabri (2019), and Teo, Leng, and Phua (2019). In addition, there are also numerous studies that investigated consumer online purchasing intention, such as those conducted by Bilgihan (2016), Lim, Heng, Ng, and Cheah (2016), Muda et al. (2016), Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, and Laukkanen (2015), Krbová and Pavelek (2015), San, Omar, and Thurasamy (2015), Trisna and Sefnedi (2018), and Roudposhti et al. (2018).

A review of the available literature indicated that there is a distinction between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior. Purchase intention is basically when an individual is aware of their effort to purchase a brand or product (Harshini, 2015). However, purchase behavior is a choice, purchase, and utilization of goods and services for the utilization of what the consumer wants (Ramya & Ali, 2016). There is currently a scarcity of research on understanding purchasing behavior, especially among Millennials, relating to low involvement products. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the online purchasing behavior of Millennials to further understand their online purchasing habits. Only Millennials who had previous experiences with online purchasing were selected to participate in this study.

It can be observed that studies conducted in Asian countries involving millennials online purchasing behavior have been conducted in urban areas such as Lahore, Pakistan (Bashir, Mehboob, & Bahtti, 2015); Dhaka city, Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2018); Kota Malang, Indonesia (Puspitasari, Al Musadieq, & Kusumawati, 2017); Klang Valley, Malaysia (Muda et al., 2016; Dhanapal, Vashu, & Subramaniam, 2015). There were only a few research studies dedicated to understanding Millennials' online purchasing behavior in suburban areas. Thus, to close the gap, this study aims to examine the online purchasing behavior of Malaysian Millennial consumers in suburban areas.

Millennials represent the biggest population group in Malaysia who use social media marketing as a medium for online purchasing (Muda, Mohd, & Hassan, 2016). According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017), there are a total of 11,679,000 Malaysians whose ages range between 20 to 39 years old. Millennials, in the context of this study, refer to those who were born between 1980 and the early 1990s. This population is the largest group of users of the internet for online shopping (Muda et al., 2016). According to Yaz (2016), Millennials, or Generation Y, are born between 1980 and 1999, and they are a cooperative, imaginative, and entrepreneurial group that will force the development of the global luxury industry over the next era.

Currently, due to the increasing appeal of the internet in Malaysia, Millennials spend a significant amount of their time on social media, and this subsequently affects their buying behavior. Millennials, regardless of their location, are heavy users of social media. Given that fact, the focus of this study is to identify the influence of social media marketing on the purchasing behavior of Millennials in suburban areas regarding low involvement products. Currently, low involvement products are popular among Millennials, as reflected by their online purchasing behavior (Wong, 2016). Low involvement products can be defined as less important products that have less perceived risk, low symbolic value, and low emotional appeal (Park & Yoon, 2017). Low involvement products can be classified as convenience products that are frequently purchased, with low prices and they require minimal comparison or shopping effort compared to high involvement products. Some of the usual or common low involvement products purchased by Millennials include apparel, beauty products, books, and inexpensive electronic gadgets.

To understand Millennials purchasing behavior of low involvement products from several websites, this study employs the theory of uses and gratification from Katz and Blumler (1974). It aims to explain how social media marketing influences Millennials' online purchasing behavior since it is closely related to media and mass communication. According to Katz and Blumler (1974), the theory of uses and gratifications is a sociological influence of how and why individuals actively seek out a particular form of social media to satisfy specific needs. This current study conceptualizes that social media marketing comprises four dimensions, namely 1) online communities, 2) interaction, 3) entertainment, and 4) perceived trust, which are new dimensions integrated into the social media concept introduced by Karman (2015). Therefore, this study examines the influences of social media marketing (online communities, interaction, entertainment, and perceived trust) on the online purchasing behavior of Millennials and investigates the moderating effect of consumer engagement on the relationship between social media marketing and Millennials' online purchasing behavior.

## **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### *Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)*

This study applies the uses and gratification theory (UGT) developed by Katz and Blumler (1974). As mentioned earlier, the UGT is a sociological influence on how and why individuals actively seek out specific social media to satisfy specific needs. In social media research, Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Klein (2004) stated that the theory can be used to identify consumers' needs and satisfaction factors to encourage them to participate in social networks, and they developed a social influence model to encourage consumer participation in virtual communities. Wu, Wang, and Tsai (2010) proposed three important assumptions for this theory, such as people are actively choosing media based on their needs; people choose media based on their wants and interests to fulfill their needs, and communication behavior is different due to social and psychological factors.

A previous study by Toor, Husnain, and Hussain (2017) employed this theory to investigate how social media influences consumers' purchasing intentions. Based on the study's assumptions, consumers actively contribute to media choice. Also, consumers' personal goals are comparatively more important than the influence of the media. The theory assumes that consumers seek out suitable media that fulfills their needs and gratifications. Thus, this theory is supported, which fits well with this study on the influence of social media marketing on Millennials' online purchasing behavior.

### *Online Purchase Behavior*

Online shopping behavior is an individual's overall perception and evaluation of the product or services during shopping online, which could result in positive or negative feedback (Katta & Patro, 2016). Li and Zhang (2002) stated that online shopping behavior relates to a customer's psychological condition about the completion of the online buying process. Moreover, online buying or shopping refers to the process of exploring and buying products or services across the internet (Varma & Argawal, 2014). Lee and Johnson (2002) mentioned that people receive several different results, which are products, information, and pleasure in terms of shopping activity. Additionally, shopping includes information on both searching behaviors and purchasing behaviors.

### *Social Media Marketing*

Some social media terms used in previous research studies include “social networking,” “social media,” and “social media marketing.” According to Wells (2011), social networking can be considered as social media tools to create a direct interaction with people they are already connected to or potential individuals they wish to be connected with. Social media is an advanced technology that facilitates interactivity and co-creation and allows the improvement and sharing of user-generated content among organizations and individuals (Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015). Maoyan, Zhujunxuan, and Sangyang (2014) explained that social media is a network and technology that creates hot news for internet users and conveys information to others.

Social media marketing is a medium through which consumers and businesses can communicate within a limited time, allowing all parties to use, experience, and gain benefits (Dwivedi, Kapoor, & Chen, 2015). Apart from that, social media marketing uses social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that are valuable for organizations and stakeholders (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). According to Farook and Abeysekara (2016), social media marketing creates new variations of the conventional options, increases the ability of firm-to-firm interaction and customer dialogue, and strengthens communications between the purchaser and seller. In this study, social media marketing consists of four dimensions, which are online communities, interaction, entertainment, and perceived trust. The following section explains the definitions and relationships of each social media marketing dimension.

#### *Online Communities*

Online communities can be divided into two categories, which are either based on offline or online sites. Offline sites refer to communities whose interest surrounds a product while online communities conduct their activities through social media (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). According to Pitta and Flower (2005), online communities are known as forums, which are formed for a specific reason, such as product information. Consumers can post their opinions regarding their satisfaction with a particular product after the consumption of said product. Within the areas of online communities, the consumer can initiate a forum thread about different topics, and these topics will continue for a year for new readers' upcoming reference and to widen their knowledge (Pitta & Fowler, 2005). Balakrishnan, Dahnil, and Yi (2014) claimed that the commitment given by community members to a brand could lead to purchasing intentions through positive word of mouth.

According to Hong and Kim (2012), the relationship between online communities and purchasing behavior includes online forums and keeping good affiliation with customers to understand customers' purchasing behavior. Consumers stay up-to-date on the developments of certain brands and products through online communities (Bilal, Ahmed, & Shahzad, 2014). According to Malmivaara (2011), customers find information convenient as online communities expose them to information and marketing messages that will affect their purchasing behavior. Wasko and Faraj (2000) found that people are more likely to participate in online communities due to physical reappearances such as promotions, raises, and discount or intangible returns such as status, moral requirement, and relationships. Bowden (2009) reported that customers interact with each other in online communities, and potential marketers found that it is necessary to put themselves in these communities. From the perspective of As'ad and Alhadid (2014), the score items of online communities return the highest mean in their studies. This shows that customers search for information about services and get information

from each other. Therefore, previous studies indicate a positive influence of the online communities on purchase intention. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H1:** When Millennials are involved in online communities in social media marketing, this will have a positive influence on their online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

### *Interaction*

According to Taprial and Kanwar (2012), interaction means the ability to add and invite friends to internet networking sites. Also, interaction helps users connect, share, and communicate with each other in real-time. Gallagher and Ransbotham (2010) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated that social media interaction is the key to changing communication between brands and consumers. In order to meet mutual interests related to a product or service, social interaction acts as a platform for contributing ideas (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). According to Kim and Ko (2010), interaction on social media is important; hence, social media itself acts as a communication tool to improve the consumer experience.

The relationship between interaction and purchasing behavior can be found in studies conducted by Balakrishnan et al. (2014), which suggests interactions in virtual communities can lead to trust developing among online consumers. Therefore, current technological advancements help online retailers to further understand their customers' needs through participating and engaging their customers in virtual communities. Moreover, instant recommendations and responses from customers help online marketers plan their marketing tactics effectively to capture market share (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Kim and Ko (2010) said that interaction in social media is important as it enables communication, whereby social media as a communication tool may improve user experience. Kim and Ko (2010) argued that social media can happen in the form of a two-way communication. Therefore, previous studies indicate a positive influence of interactions on purchasing intention. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Interaction in social media marketing positively influences Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

### *Entertainment*

Babin and Attaway (2000) defined entertainment as dimensions of aesthetic response and value and is related to intangible and hedonic attributes in shopping. Agichtein, Castillo, Donato et al. (2008) maintained that social media experiences are a form of entertainment. Being entertained, amused, and experiencing enjoyable experiences is a hedonic view of social media users as pleasure seekers (Manthiou, Chiang, & Tang, 2013). Entertainment is the capacity to fulfill an individual needs for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment or emotional enjoyment (Harshini, 2015).

The relationship between entertainment and purchasing behavior can be found in studies conducted by Kim and Ko (2010), where it was found that entertainment affects more variables than other properties. According to Lin and Lu (2011) and Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009), the most crucial factor affecting the behavior of social network sites users is entertainment. On top of that, Raney, Arpan, Pashupati, and Brill (2003) reported a positive evaluation of information enriched with entertaining elements to lead recipients to or re-visit a website to compare information without the entertainment features. Khan, Dongping, and Wahab (2016)

proposed in their studies that the entertaining content inspires and influences brand fans to consume and participate.

Various studies from Kaye (2007), Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011), and Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009) defined entertainment as a strong reason for social media use. Park et al. (2009) mentioned that social media participation to some degree is driven by entertainment. Muntinga et al. (2011) found that social media customers reach brands with connected content such as enjoyment, relaxation, and pastime. Therefore, based on previous studies, there is a positive influence of entertainment on purchase intention. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Entertainment in social media marketing has a positive influence on Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

#### *Perceived Trust*

According to Garbariono and Johnson (1999), trust can be defined as the customers' confidence in the quality and reliability of the services that are offered by a particular organization. Besides this, the trust will increase the customers' intentions to buy a product or service from a company (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015; Lynch, Kent, & Srinivasan, 2001). Fundamentally, both offline and online marketing increase customers' perception of a company's trustworthiness (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001; Gefen, 2002; Lynch, Kent, & Srinivasan et al., 2001).

The relationship of perceived trust and purchasing behavior can be discovered from studies conducted by Muda et al. (2016), which suggested that trust is the main factor since the virtual environment is higher in transaction doubt compared to the traditional setting. The studies highlight that perceived trust has a highly significant relationship with the intention of Millennials to purchase products online. According to Kim and Ko (2012), customers love the entertainment and communication provided by company websites, which result in significantly increased trust towards these websites; subsequently, profits will be increased as well. According to Razak et al. (2014), the effect of customer trust on online shopping is to eliminate any doubt even though people have different ideas about online trust. Also, online trust is becoming the main feature of e-commerce surroundings. This is supported by Kimery and McCard (2002), where they claim that customers have both positive and negative probabilities on online trust that affect whether they are willing to enable and accept the online transaction in the future. According to Gefen and Straub (2004) and Pavlou and Fygenson (2006), trust is the main factor affecting purchase behavior in retail outlets and on the internet. In research performed by Kiran, Sharma, and Mittal (2008), various factors affecting online buying behavior and attitude towards online shopping focus are based on trust. This finding is supported by previous studies strongly indicating a positive influence of perceived trust on purchase intention. This study highlights that:

**H4:** Strong perceived trust in social media marketing will have a positive influence on Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

#### *Consumer Engagement*

Consumer engagement is a central element of social media that enables connection, communication, and engagement of brands with consumers (Kujur & Singh, 2017). Consumer engagement can be described as the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship by means of a website to communicate brand value (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Zailskaitė-Jakstė and Kuvykaitė (2013) viewed consumer engagement as a strategic factor to

help and maintain a competitive advantage and allow anticipation for future directions of business development. Besides, Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012) defined consumer engagement as the intensity and connection of the individual's participation with the organization whose activities are initiated by customers or the organization. In other words, Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric and Ilic et al. (2011) confirmed that consumer engagement is a co-creative and interactive consumer experience with the object that prompts a specific psychological state.

The relationship between online communities and consumer engagement is that consumers purchase goods from a company's website and give product reviews on the website of the product's page after making their purchase (Wu, Fan, & Zhao, 2017). Wu, Fan, and Zhao's (2017) study identified that online community pages include a significant amount of common area and groups for specific discussion boards in which customers seek or deliver information regarding various aspects of the products and the brand. Additionally, consumers can use their accounts to access the community on the e-commerce website. Then, consumers can post messages and reply to the posts made by other community members (Wu, Fan, & Zhao, 2017).

In a study by Wu, Fan, and Zhao (2017), the relationship between interaction and consumer engagement is demonstrated via company-established community pages that act as a platform to engage and interact with their consumers and also enable interaction among consumers. The study found that a coefficient of the interaction term is positive and significant, implying that the effect of community engagement on doing online product reviews is moderated by the customer's tenure. Also, community engagement may include interactions with other customers as well as individual behavior.

The relationship between social media marketing dimensions, which is entertainment and consumer engagement can be referred to a study by Heinonen (2018). The study stated that the entertainment factor has an emotional influence on the engagement. In many methods, reading community conversations serves as an addition to reading gossip magazines.

According to Thakur (2018), there seems to be a minimal focus on existing literature regarding the relationship between customer engagement and trust. Consumers' trust towards a retailer is influenced by consumer engagement that exists when consumers visit or download content from a retailer's mobile site or app.

The relationship between consumer engagement and purchasing behavior can be discovered in a study conducted by Barhemmati and Ahmad (2015). In this study, it was found that after the process of engaging consumers through social network marketing, where the emotional connection occurs between the marketer and the consumer, there is a substantial chance for that business to achieve the core objectives of the link marketing by persuading the consumer to buy the product or service.

Consumer engagement is conceptualized as a unidimensional variable, and it has a moderating role in anticipating the influences of social media marketing on Millennials' purchasing behavior towards low involvement products. Therefore, based on previous studies, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

**H5:** Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between online communities and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

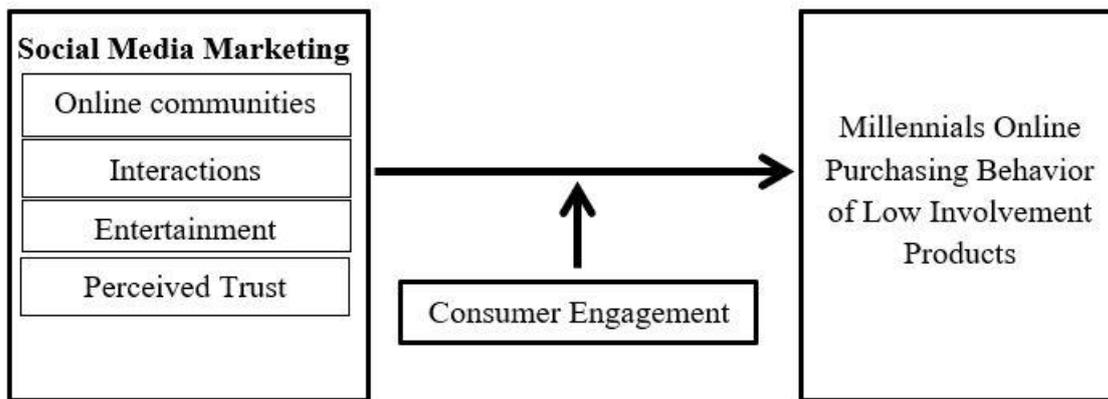
**H6:** Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between interactions and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

**H7:** Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between entertainment and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

**H8:** Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between perceived trust and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework, which was initially adapted from Karman's model. The independent variables in this study consisted of four (4) social media marketing dimensions, namely online communities, interactions, entertainment, and perceived trust. The dependent variable is the Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. Also, this study integrates two new social media marketing dimensions, which are entertainment, proposed by Karman (2015), and perceived trust, proposed by Muda et al. (2016). The framework for this study is as follows:

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



## Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach via a survey which involved Millennials. The targeted respondents were aged between 18 to 35 years old and had purchased low involvement products like apparel, beauty products, inexpensive gadgets and books from online platforms. The sampling design of this study used non-probability sampling techniques. The population of Millennials in suburban areas in the southern region of Malaysia is 1,229.5 (dosm.gov.my, 2017). Hence, the sample sizes of this study are 384 respondents, referring to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table because the population of Millennials in suburban areas is more than one (1) million. The research questionnaire was split into five (5) sections. Section One (1) contains the screening questions, which consist of three (3) questions: (1) to determine if the Millennials have online purchasing experience; (2) to ensure that the Millennials' range in age between 18 to 35 years old; and (3) to identify if the Millennials have experience purchasing low involvement products. For Section Two (2), the questions were divided into four (4) sub-categories; online communities (Karman, 2015; Liao, To, & Hsu, 2013), interactions (Karman, 2015; Kim & Ko, 2010), entertainment (Kim and Ko, 2010; Kesharwani, Sreeram, & Desai, 2017; Mathwick, Malhotra, & Edward, 2001), and perceived trust (Hajli, 2015; Shang, Wu, & Sie, 2017; Chu & Kim, 2011). Section Three focused on online purchasing behavior questions (Tiruwa, Yadav, & Suri, 2016; Toor et al., 2017), whereas Section Four was related to consumer engagement questions (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlstrom, 2012; Toor et al., 2017) and Section Five focused on the respondent's demographic information. All of the measurement items for Section Two (ii), Three (iii) and Four (iv) use a five-point Likert Scale, which is a form of interval scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software to help provide the research hypothesis and to achieve the research objectives.

The data were analysed using multiple methods. We used descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the respondents' online purchasing background, and factor analysis was used to reduce the number of variables into a set of smaller ones that summarize the essential information contained in the variables. We also examined the consistency and stability of the measurement variables through reliability analysis; and correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and directions of the relationship between all the constructs. Finally, hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the moderating effect on the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Also, screening questions aimed to verify whether the respondents had experience making online purchases from sites such as Lazada, 11Street, Shopee.my, and My Fave.

## Data Analysis and Results

All of the respondents agreed that they had experience in online purchasing, that their age ranged between 18-35 years old, and they often purchase low involvement products such as apparel, beauty products, inexpensive gadgets and books through websites. The gender distribution of the respondents was 45.6% male and 54.4% female. As shown in Table 1, more than half of the respondents (64.3%) made a purchase online in the last 1-3 months. The most popular category of low involvement products bought online is beauty products (25.8%). In terms of favorite online websites to shop low involvement products, the majority of the respondents choose Lazada (39.3%). Examples of top online websites that respondents in Malaysia love to shop at are Lazada, 11Street, Shopee.my, and My Fave (Astro Awani, 2017).

Table 1: Respondent's Online Purchase Background

<b>Online Purchase Background</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency (N = 384)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Last Time Made Purchase Online</b>	1-3 months ago	247	64.3
	4-6 months ago	137	35.7
	Total	384	100.0
<b>Frequency Purchase Past 6 Months</b>	Often	129	33.6
	Very Often	76	19.8
	Rarely	131	34.1
	Very Rare	48	12.5
	Total	384	100.0
<b>Product Category Most Bought Online</b>	Apparel	93	24.2
	Beauty Products	99	25.8
	Books	32	8.3
	Inexpensive Gadget	78	20.3
	Others	82	21.4
	Total	384	100.0
<b>Favourite Online Websites to Shop</b>	Lazada	151	39.3
	11Street	49	12.8
	Shopee.my	84	21.9
	My Fave	3	0.8
	Others	97	25.3
	Total	384	100.0

## Factor Analysis

According to Zulkepli, Sipan, and Jibril (2017), an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the factor structure of the scale. Next, a reliability analysis was carried out to assess the reliability of the questionnaires. Exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis with varimax rotation was chosen to identify the reliability of the social media marketing dimensions and Millennials' online purchasing behavior. According to Malhotra (2010), the varimax procedure is an orthogonal technique of factor rotation that reduces the number of variables with high loadings on a factor, thereby increasing the interpretability of the factors.

As mentioned in the methodology section, all the measurement items of social media marketing dimensions, online purchase behavior and consumer engagement were adapted from previous studies (Karman, 2015; Liao, To & Hsu, 2013; Kim & Ko, 2010; Kesharwani, Sreeram, & Desai, 2017; Mathwick, Malhotra, & Edward, 2001; Hajli, 2015; Shang, Wu, & Sie, 2017; Chu & Kim, 2011; Tiruwa, Yadav, & Suri, 2016; Toor et al., 2017; Gummerus et al., 2012). Based on Table 2, the factor analysis of social media marketing dimensions includes twenty (20) items. For social media marketing dimensions (independent variable), it results in four (4) factors as conceptualized earlier in the study. The four (4) factors are online communities (four items); interaction (five items); entertainment (four items); and perceived trust (five items). Two (2) items are removed in the factor analysis due to cross factor loading.

Table 2: Factor Analysis of Social Media Marketing

Items	F1	F2	F3	F4
<b>Perceived Trust</b>				
3 Social media marketing gives me an impression that they keep my privacy information safe.	0.796			
5 I have confidence in the contacts on my friends list on social media marketing.	0.765			
4 I trust most contacts on my friends list on the social media marketing.	0.756			
2 I expect that the advice given by social media marketing is their best judgment.	0.719			
1 Promises made by social media marketing are likely to be reliable.	0.713			
<b>Interactions</b>				
3 It is possible to do two-way interaction between an administrator and user through social media marketing.		0.769		
2 It is possible to exchange opinions or conversations with other users through social media marketing.		0.728		

1	It is possible to add or invite more friends to the social media marketing online community.	0.708			
4	It is possible to share information with other users through social media marketing.	0.702			
5	It is easy to convey my opinion through social media marketing.	0.661			
<b>Entertainment</b>					
4	I think the online shopping website for a low involvement product is very entertaining.		0.760		
3	It is exciting to use social media marketing.		0.749		
2	It is fun to collect information on low involvement products through social media marketing.		0.697		
5	The online shopping website gives me a sense of enthusiasm when going through it.		0.639		
<b>Online Communities</b>					
1	Social media marketing online communities allow direct user input or posting on the site.			0.715	
4	We are continuously encouraged to bring new knowledge about low involvement products into these online communities.			0.675	
2	Social media marketing online communities are useful for gathering information about opinions of the low involvement products.			0.645	
3	At least some of the members of social media marketing online community know me.			0.543	
	Eigenvalues	6.94	1.92	1.47	1.11
	Percent of Variance Explained	18.65	17.47	15.53	11.92
	Total Variance Explained				63.56
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)				0.875
	Barlett's Test of Sphericity				3334.45
	Significant				0.000

The factor analysis for Millennials' online purchase behavior (dependent variable) has one (1) factor with six (6) items, and no item is removed. All the commonalities are over 0.50, and the range of factor loading values range between 0.722 and 0.867, which meet all the criteria according to Hair et al. (2010), who stated that commonalities of the variables must be greater

than 0.50. Table 3 shows the result of the factor analysis of Millennials' online purchasing behavior.

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Millennials' Online Purchasing Behavior

	Items	F1
1	I will repeat buying low involvement products in the future through the online websites.	0.850
2	I will refer to online websites to my family for low involvement products.	0.839
3	I will refer to online websites to my friends for low involvement products.	0.867
4	Using online websites increase my interest in repeat buying of low involvement products.	0.843
5	I am very likely to buy low involvement products recommended by my friends on social media marketing.	0.768
6	Using social media marketing help me make decisions better before purchasing a low involvement product.	0.722
	Eigenvalues	4.00
	Percent of Variance Explained	66.67
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.869
	Barlett's Test of Sphericity	1374.75
	Significant	0.000

Consumer engagement (moderator variable) items are not removed, and the analysis produced one (1) factor comprising of five (5) items. All the commonalities are over 0.50, and the range of factor loading values is between 0.759 and 0.855; which means it meets all the criteria according to Hair et al. (2010), the commonalities of the variables must be greater than 0.50. Table 4 illustrates the result of factor analysis of consumer engagement.

Table 4: Factor Analysis of Consumer Engagement

	Items	F1
1	I often visit pages of low involvement products I follow on social media marketing.	0.855
2	I often read posts of low involvement products I follow on social media marketing.	0.844
3	I often use the "like" option on low involvement products posts; I follow on social media marketing.	0.809
4	I follow brand pages of my interest to get information (e.g., new products).	0.759
5	Being part of low involvement products I follow on social media marketing, increased my trust on the products.	0.844
		3.37
	Eigenvalues	
	Percent of Variance Explained	67.71
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.849
	Barlett's Test of Sphericity	987.53
	Significant	0.000

### Reliability Analysis

Table 5 shows the reliability analysis of social media marketing dimensions such as online communities, interaction, entertainment, and perceived trust. The findings indicate the Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.736, 0.842, 0.793, and 0.855, accordingly. As for the variable of Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products, the result shows a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.898 while consumer engagement has a value of 0.878. This indicates that all of the studied variables have Cronbach's alpha values that are greater than 0.70. Cronbach's alpha value that is more than 0.70 and closer to the value of 1 indicates high internal consistency reliability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Table 5: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Variables	No of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Social Media Marketing	Online Communities	4	0.736
	Interaction	5	0.842
	Entertainment	4	0.793
	Perceived trust	5	0.855
	Millennials Online Purchase Behavior on Low Involvement Product	5	0.898
Consumer Engagement		5	0.878

### Correlation Analysis

Table 6 illustrates the intercorrelations between social media marketing dimensions (online communities, interactions, entertainment, and perceived trust), Millennials' online purchasing behavior and consumer engagement are dominant at 0.01 and are positively correlated, with values in the range of 0.430 to 0.482. The results of the correlation analysis indicate that all the dimensions of social media marketing are positively and significantly correlated with the Millennials' online purchasing behavior and consumer engagement.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Online communities	1					
2	Interactions	.565**	1				
3	Entertainment	.528**	.475**	1			
4	Perceived trust	.516**	.512**	.401**	1		
5	Millennial online purchase behavior	.528**	.427**	.671**	.576**	1	
6	Consumer engagement	.440**	.468**	.430**	.439**	.482**	1

### Hierarchical Regression Analysis

As shown in Table 7, the results of the hierarchical regressions analysis reveal that all three (3) variables – online communities, entertainment, and perceived trust, are found to have significant and positive influences toward the Millennials’ online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. The results show that social media marketing dimensions for online communities (0.010,  $p < 0.01$ ), entertainment (0.000,  $p < 0.01$ ), and perceived trust (0.000,  $p < 0.01$ ) are strongly influenced by the Millennials’ online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. The finding indicates that three (3) of the social media marketing dimensions (online communities, entertainment, and perceived trust) have a positive influence on the Millennials’ online purchasing behavior with  $p < 0.01$ . Thus, it supports the hypotheses (H1), (H3), and (H4). Meanwhile, the social media marketing dimensions of interaction are found not to be significantly influenced by Millennials’ online purchasing behavior of low involvement products as illustrated by the results (0.266,  $p > 0.01$ ). Thus, hypothesis (H2) is rejected.

Hierarchical regression analyses are used to determine the moderators’ relationship in the study. The analysis for the moderator effect indicates that consumer engagement does not moderate the relationship between social media marketing with Millennials’ online purchasing behavior of low involvement products as the interaction terms are not significant. Thus, hypotheses H5, H6, H7, and H8 are rejected.

Table 7: Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Variables	Std Beta Step 1	Std Beta Step 2	Std Beta Step 3
Millennials online purchase behavior	<b>Independent Variable</b>			
	<b>Social Media Marketing:</b>			
	Online Communities	0.118	0.102	-0.298
	Interaction	-0.049	-0.077	0.042
	Entertainment	0.494	0.470	0.884
	Perceived Trust	0.342	0.316	0.475
	<b>Moderating Variable:</b>			
	Consumer Engagement		0.132	0.504
	<b>Interaction Terms:</b>			
	Online Communities X Consumer Engagement			0.717
	Interaction X Consumer Engagement			-0.221
	Entertainment X Consumer Engagement			-0.822

	Perceived Trust X Consumer Engagement			-0.245
R <sup>2</sup>		0.570	0.582	0.587
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.565	0.576	0.577
R <sup>2</sup> Change		0.570	0.012	0.006
F Change		125.42	10.80	1.31
Sig. Change	F	0.000	0.001	0.268

## Discussion of supported hypotheses

*H1: When Millennials are involved in online communities in social media marketing, this will have a positive influence on their online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

The results show that online communities have a positive effect on the Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products and have a significant coefficient beta ( $\beta$ ) of 0.118. Thus, online communities are found to significantly influence Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products (0.010,  $P < 0.01$ ). The positive and significant effects of online communities are supported by a previous study by Balakrishnan et al. (2014). Balakrishnan et al. (2014) suggested that online consumers can develop trust by interacting in virtual communities. Besides, online retailers should use the consumer interaction platform to recognize their customers, thus investing and engaging in virtual communities on websites is considered critical. Furthermore, Karman (2015) also had related findings on the positive influence of the online communities on purchase intention.

As far as Millennials are concerned, the studies show that they are interested in making online purchases of low involvement products such as apparel, beauty products, books, and inexpensive gadgets because of convenience, reasonable pricing, and affordability. In addition to that, Millennials could chat with others about their personal opinions, stories, and perceptions. They expect to learn more about the products, services or brands in a social network environment. Also, this study shows that the Millennials expose their actual behavior through online communities, especially after purchasing low involvement products through online platforms such as Lazada, 11Street, Shopee.my, and My Fave. Millennials in suburban areas in the southern region of Malaysia, namely Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, and Johor, seek more information about their favorite low involvement products from online communities. The advanced technology helps Millennials in suburban areas to use the internet to explore and widen their interactions. They receive more information through the internet. Therefore, it is easier for them to make online purchases compared to in-store customers. This would save their transportation cost and time. Also, some of the online websites provide free shipping. Thus, favorite consumer items can be directly delivered to their homes.

This current trend is in line with the theory of uses and gratification applied in this study. For example, people seek out different social media usage to fulfill their specific purchase needs. Millennials in suburban areas purchase low involvement products through online sites such as Lazada, 11Street, Shopee.my, My Fave, Facebook, Instagram, Mudah.my, Go Shop, Zalora, Chillindo, Tabao, AliExpress, eBay, and Alibaba. Also, different online websites have unique benefits and advantages such as offering more discounts, cash on delivery (COD), free membership, collecting points and redemption of rewards, discounts on birthdays, lucky draw

prizes, and free shipping. Thus, Millennials tend to choose their favorite online websites to fulfill their specific needs and wants.

*H3: Entertainment in social media marketing has a positive influence on Millennials online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

The element of entertainment in social media marketing shows a positive and significant relationship with Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products, and it has a standard coefficient beta ( $\beta$ ) of 0.494. Entertainment has a value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This is in line with previous studies conducted by Kim and Ko (2010) in relation to the context of luxury brands, in which they too found that entertainment has a positive influence on purchase intention. Thus, the element of entertainment aspect is vital in the social media content. Besides that, all activities in social media should be entertaining, such as creating relationship with others, providing customized service, free entertainment content, and obtaining genuine information on personal interests (Kim & Ko, 2010).

As discussed earlier, entertainment is the new dimension integrated into Karman's (2015) framework. The results of this study show that entertainment has a positive influence on the Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. The entertainment variable has a positive impact on online purchasing behavior due to Millennials' characteristics that can be described as trendy, youthful, and technologically savvy. Entertainment value influences Millennials' online purchasing behavior as they feel that the environment and performance of online websites are considerably interesting and enjoyable while using online websites. It is, indeed, an important dimension in social media marketing. The designs of online websites are also important to attract consumers. Thus, entertainment value could help influence Millennials' purchasing decision because it could change their perception and mood while they scroll through pictures to get information about low involvement products. According to Song and Yoo (2016), a hedonic benefit such as entertainment has a positive relationship with purchasing decisions.

Katz and Blumler (1974) used the uses and gratification theory to explain that people actively chose specific media for their specific needs. According to Diddi and LaRose (2006), this theory could be used to understand social media users' need, such as entertainment. Millennials choose specific online websites to fulfill their needs due to their attitude of always being up-to-date with the current trends in social media such as fashion, beauty products, books and gadget. Besides that, the uses and gratification theory helps marketing managers plan and design their online websites well to develop customer experience and to engage with consumers (Ngai, Moon, Lam et al. 2015). According to Toor et al. (2017), social networking sites continuously provide more features, which enables consumers to connect and chat, upload videos and promote concepts and ideas with others. Therefore, consumers, especially Millennials, enjoy using social media marketing because these online websites provide more features to entertain them during the process of making a purchase.

*H4: Strong perceived trust in social media marketing will have a positive influence on Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

The findings of this study indicated a positive and significant effect of perceived trust and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products, which has a standard coefficient beta ( $\beta$ ) of 0.342. Perceived trust has a significant value at 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This study, which is aligned with previous studies, is supported by a study by Razak et al. (2014) who found a significant relationship between online trust and repurchase intention. Furthermore, the findings are also supported by Shah Alam, Bakar, Ismail, and Ahsan's (2008)

study. The researchers found that trust has a significant relationship with online shopping. They also claim that trust is important to add value to the online shopping experience and to build relationships. In addition, Saleem, Zahra, and Yaseen (2017) found that trust is directly and positively related to repurchase intention. Besides that, Hajli, Sims, Zadeh, and Richard (2017) found a positive relationship between trust and purchase intention in the context of social networking sites. Significantly, in this study, it is shown that perceived trust is important for influencing repurchase intention among Millennials.

Perceived trust is one of the main contributions of this current study, which was initially presumed to be a significant dimension in social media marketing. The study results indicate perceived trust as an important dimension that has a positive influence on Millennials' online purchasing behavior. Millennials place trust as a vital aspect, especially in terms of payment transaction, shipping process, and product information on a website. Also, positive feedback from existing and loyal consumers creates solid trust on websites.

In relation to the theory of uses and gratification, Millennials choose social media marketing that fulfills their specific needs and wants because they trust the marketers and websites. Thus, Millennials will stay loyal to online websites that they trust most. Moreover, marketers must grab this opportunity to maintain trust to achieve a long-term relationship with consumers. This study indicates that Millennials in suburban areas also have strong perceived trust in social media marketing, and this influences their online purchasing behavior. Therefore, Millennials trust the procedure of online websites such as payment transactions and shipping processes. They place value on the fact that the delivered item must be the same as the ordered items and are well packaged.

## **Discussion of not supported hypotheses**

*H2: Interaction in social media marketing positively influences Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

Surprisingly, this current study found that interaction has no significant effect on Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products, which has a standard coefficient beta ( $\beta$ ) of (-0.049). Interaction has a significant value at 0.266 ( $p > 0.01$ ). The current finding is inconsistent with many past research findings. For instance, Karman (2015) found that interaction has a positive impact on purchase intention. Similarly, Kim and Ko's (2010) study found that interaction had a positive influence on purchase intention. However, interaction in this study has no positive influence on Millennials' online purchasing behavior. This might be due to the poor execution by marketers and online websites in maintaining their engagement with customers, which results in poor relationships with existing consumers. In addition, this might also be due to the customer service team not properly assisting customers and resolving their issues, such as providing better understanding of the needs, problems, and interests of Millennials.

The study results show that there is no interaction on the social media marketing between suburban Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement product. This could be due to the characteristics of Millennials from suburban areas as they generally have less interaction and are shy to communicate with others. Also, this might be because social interaction in suburban areas is comparatively lower than urban areas because of limited contact with outsiders.

Apart from that, Millennials in suburban areas might face problems adapting to new changes, especially to technology. It is commonly understood that internet coverage in suburban areas is relatively poor. Due to this limitation, Millennials need to find a place that

has strong internet connection to stay connected with social media marketing. Besides that, there is no interaction between marketers and Millennials due to a lack of interactivity in online shopping. For instance, the consumer cannot have face-to-face negotiations with the seller. Also, consumers do not receive personal attention from the sales representatives to help them make purchases.

*H5: Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between online communities and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

*H6: Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between interactions and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

*H7: Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between entertainment and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

*H8: Consumer engagement moderates the relationship between perceived trust and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.*

None of these hypotheses were supported: The results of a hierarchical regression analysis showed that the relationship between social media marketing dimensions and the online purchasing behavior of Millennials of low involvement products is not moderated by consumer engagement. The result indicates that the relationships between the interactions of online communities, interaction, entertainment, and perceived trust with consumer engagement are not significant ( $F$  change = 0.131,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, H5, H6, H7, and H8 are rejected.

This study shows that consumer engagement does not moderate between social media marketing dimensions (online communities, interaction, entertainment, and perceived trust) and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. This might be because online marketers lack the desire to encourage consumer engagement, especially online. It is also observed that there is insufficient participation from members in the online communities in sharing and communicating their experiences of products or services. Moreover, online marketers should revise their current online website activities to engage the consumer in staying connected with social media marketing.

It is recommended that online marketers invest in placing more entertainment content to ensure consumer satisfaction while surfing their online websites. A study done by Greve (2014) found that brand image is negatively moderated by engagement activity and negative engagement activity has an effect on brand image and brand loyalty. Thus, a higher level of engagement could weaken the major link between brand image and brand loyalty. The findings in this study are not in line with the past research from Barhemmati and Ahmad (2015), whose study found that a positive correlation between consumer engagement and consumer purchase behavior was present.

Thus, customer participation is a benefit for firms to encourage consumers to make decisions. In this study, the Millennials do not participate in online communities because there is no interaction between them and the marketers. Similarly, Toor et al. (2017) supported the claim that consumer engagement has a significantly positive relationship with consumer purchasing intention. Therefore, consumers are more engaged with the sites because social network marketing activities encourage their engagement. The study results show that consumer engagement is not moderated by social media marketing dimensions and the online purchasing behavior of Millennials regarding low involvement products because marketers do not provide attractive marketing activities to attract consumers towards their products. Also, there is limited two-way communication between marketers and consumers.

## Conclusion

In this study, social media marketing is a multi-dimensional variable consisting of four (4) dimensions, namely online communities, interaction, entertainment, and perceived trust. The framework of the study was adapted from Karman (2015). The result of the study confirms the significant and positive effects of social media marketing (online communities, entertainment, and perceived trust) on Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. The integration of new dimensions of social media marketing consists of entertainment and perceived trust, as proposed by Karman (2015) and Muda et al. (2016). The results of this study illustrate that entertainment and perceived trust have positive and significant impacts on Millennials' online purchasing behaviors. However, the moderating effect of consumers shows that consumer engagement does not significantly moderate the relationship between social media marketing dimensions and Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products. This study uses theory from Katz and Blumler (1974), namely the uses and gratification theory. This study is made compatible with the theory to highlight the result of the influences of social media marketing on Millennials' online purchasing behavior of low involvement products.

The findings of this study provide several managerial implications for management personnel, especially marketing managers of Malaysian e-commerce marketplaces like Lazada, 11Street, Shopee.my and My Fave. The findings of this study provide marketing managers with a better understanding of suburban Millennials' online purchasing behavior. Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that marketers should be more concerned about consumers' complaints, suggestions, or recommendations regarding the products offered. Besides that, marketers should follow technological trends and be prepared for the emergence of evolving changes in market demand.

There are several limitations to this study. First, this study was conducted in suburban areas in the southern region of Malaysia. Secondly, this study does not differentiate which source of device Millennials use to do online purchasing—whether by using an online website or mobile application.

It is recommended that future researchers use the population of Millennials in suburban areas in the northern region and east coast region in Malaysia. Second, further research could provide more specific platforms for online website users or mobile applications for online purchasing purposes. Third, future research can follow the current framework and include additional variables like the mediating variables. Finally, a future study can be carried out using consumer engagement as the moderator, similar to the study conducted by Greve (2014). Such a study should focus on analyzing customer engagement from a longitudinal perspective with a longer timeframe.

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