

**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ATTITUDE IN  
INFLUENCING CONSUMER PURCHASE  
INTENTION TOWARDS ONLINE  
APPAREL SHOPPING  
IN MALAYSIA**

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**ASIA e UNIVERSITY**

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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ATTITUDE IN INFLUENCING  
CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS  
ONLINE APPAREL SHOPPING IN MALAYSIA

SELVI @ KAUSILHA VIJAYAN

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## ABSTRACT

Online apparel shopping has gained an immense share in Malaysia's e-commerce market. Despite being one of the top products online, the online apparel purchase intention is not well explored and a minimally researched topic among academicians. Given the potential of this segment, a holistic and integrated framework remain absent, which warrants the goal of this thesis. With Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a baseline model, the conceptual framework was extended with attitude as the mediator together with seven variables (perceived risk, web experience, pricing, utilitarian shopping orientation, hedonic shopping orientation, convenience and products and service attributes) to study on the online apparel purchase intention. Specifically, this study pursued to develop a framework that represents the factors influencing consumers' purchase intention and examine the role of attitude as mediator. Based on purposive sampling via Facebook advertising, a total of 314 responses were garnered through a self-administered questionnaire from online shoppers in Malaysia. Through Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), the results revealed that 17 out of 22 hypotheses tested are supported. The model explains a 74 percent variance in attitude and 91 percent variance in purchase intention. The study has established a direct relationship with perceived risk, web experience, pricing, utilitarian shopping orientation, hedonic shopping orientation, and products and service attributes towards attitude. Besides, the study has confirmed a direct relationship with pricing, utilitarian shopping orientation, hedonic shopping orientation, convenience towards online apparel purchase intention. The study has also confirmed the mediating effect with all independent variables except convenience, thus supporting the hypothesis as the mediating variable. Academically, the integrated framework contributes to marketing and online apparel literature by combining TAM, TPB, attitude as the mediator, and other variables in the Malaysian context. These novel findings provide an understanding of consumers' purchase intention and guidance to online retailers and marketers in articulating their marketing strategies to persuade favourable intention towards online apparel.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Online Apparel Purchase Intention, Perceived Risk, Convenience, Utilitarian, Hedonic, Pricing, Web Experience, Product and Services Attributes.

## APPROVAL

I certify that I have supervised /read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, as a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

B2B	: Business-to-Business
B2C	: Business-to-Customer
C2C	: Customer-to-Customer
TRA	: Theory Reasoned Action
TPB	: Theory Planned Behaviour
TAM	: Technology Acceptance Model
UTAUT	: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Science
PU	: Perceived Usefulness
PEOU	: Perceived Ease of Use
SEM	: Structural Equation Modelling
PLS-SEM	: Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling
AVE	: Average Variance Extracted
CR	: Composite Reliability
VIF	: Variance Influence Factor
ATT	: Attitude
INT	: Intention
PR	: Perceived Risk
CONV	: Convenience
WEX	: Web Experience
SOU	: Utilitarian Shopping Orientation
SOH	: Hedonic Shopping Orientation
PC	: Pricing
PSA	: Products and Services Attributes
ATOA	: Attitude towards Online Apparel
OAPI	: Online Apparel Purchase Intention
CB-SEM	: Covariance based Structural Equation Modelling

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The first chapter presents an introduction to the purview of the research. The chapter starts with the background of the study, which is the overview of internet penetration, e-commerce, online culture, online apparel shopping, and its current trends in Malaysia. The problem statement of the research is stated, followed by the research questions and research objectives, respectively. The scope of the study is discussed and followed by the significance of the study. The definition of terms and organisation of the thesis are stated in subsequent sections. This chapter is then ended with the summary.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Since the time of its inception, the internet has magnified rapidly as the common lingua franca of the digital world. With the penetration of Transmission Control Protocol/ Internet Protocol (TCP/ IP), the internet became the worldwide interconnector of major computer networking due to its endless capabilities including electronic mail systems, information search, online social networking, and multimedia streaming services such as listening to music or watching movies, file sharing, shopping, and many more. According to the International Telecommunication Union (2019), internet users were estimated at around 4.1 billion worldwide in 2019. Based on the world population of an estimated 7.7 billion in 2019, internet users represent about 53 percent of the world population (United Nations, 2019). In terms of Southeast

Asia internet penetration, Malaysia was recognised as the fourth country with the highest penetration among Asian countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines (Internet World Statistics, 2019). MCMC (2019) disclosed that internet users in Malaysia are estimated at 28.7 million in the year 2018, compared to 2.5 million in 2006. The internet growth rate and penetration in Malaysia are measured as rapid growth among Southeast Asian countries (Nielsen, 2019). Internet penetration had been further accelerated by the broadband expansion in Malaysia (Hassan & Ali, 2012). Malaysia reported having the highest number of people who use their smartphones as a medium to access the internet (Consumer Barometer by Google, 2018).

As such, the rapid growth of internet technology had taken a shift in electronic commerce (e-commerce) advancement and its universal application. The rapid development of the World Wide Web made a shift from traditional businesses to interact with the customer and gives rise to many business start-ups all around the world. E-commerce creates a 24 hours interactive virtual environment by encouraging the exchange of communications, especially products and services, using web-based applications (Krishnan et al., 2017). A report by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI, 2017) revealed that the e-commerce market had contributed about RM 68 billion to the GDP value in the year 2017. Looking at the purchasing power in the e-commerce marketplace, the growth of online shopping creates significant marketing opportunities for e-retailers.

Businesses are able to reach consumers effortlessly without any time and geographical limitation and as a critical element of the e-commerce trend (Kabango & Asa, 2015). The advantages of e-commerce have an impact on businesses, and small and medium enterprises (SME) due to the accessibility to global markets allows them

to interact with the international e-commerce marketplace (Rahayu, 2017). As noted in the Ericsson Mobility Report (2019), Southeast Asian countries' populations are mainly young consumers aged 35 and below, providing a healthy environment to support e-commerce expansion. In that view, Malaysia is seen to be having a significant source for online shopping and has the potential to emerge as the next e-commerce hub in Southeast Asia (Hoppe, 2017). It was reported that there is an estimate of 1.66 billion active online shoppers worldwide in the year 2017 (Statista.com, 2017).

Statistics by Euromonitor (2017) reported that Malaysians spent about RM 3.97 billion on online shopping in 2016 and expected to rise above RM 6.25 billion in 2020. MCMC (2017) revealed that almost 57 percent of online shoppers purchase a few times in a year, and about almost 48.8 percent of internet users purchase products. Furthermore, more than 50 percent of online users were reported to shop online at least once a month (Wong, 2018). For that reason, the online retailer and service providers must divulge to learn more about their potential customers, particularly about consumers' intention towards online shopping. Many firms are joining the bandwagon of the internet wave for the prospect of business.

According to Nielsen (2019), the top items purchased by online users globally are fashion at 61 percent, travel at 59 percent, books, and music at 49 percent and IT and Mobile at 47 percent. There seem to be more and more consumers purchase durable items than consumable products online, and the top category purchased is the apparel in almost all regions. In Malaysia, fashion and accessories are considered the second largest e-commerce category (Statista, 2019). Many major apparel brands have explored e-commerce as a way of expanding their business, such as Padini, Armani Exchange, Polo, Tommy Hilfiger, and G2000. Customers can shop by looking at the

vibrant images of their products and enjoy hassle-free shopping with good return policies similar to the traditional stores, thus gaining the advantage of the booming e-commerce industry.

Statista (2019) forecasted that the global online fashion market reached USD 533 billion in 2018 and continue to grow to USD 872 billion by 2023. In 2018, apparel accounted for 65 percent of the online fashion market (Statista, 2019). In major countries such as the United States, the value of apparel purchases made By American shoppers amounted to US 68 billion and projected to reach US 100 billion in 2021 (Statista, 2019). A report by eCommerceDB (2019) revealed that UK online shoppers spent about US 23 billion on online apparel, fashion accessories, and footwear in 2019. A survey by Shopee Malaysia using 140,000 subjects to scrutinise the insights of online shopping found that the online shopping had been a hit whereby almost 85 percent of online shoppers aged below 35 years (The Star, 2017). On top of that, around 90 percent of the respondents shop at least once a month. Importantly, clothing and accessories are the top categories purchased by those aged below 35 years. The survey also discovered that 95 percent of the respondents cited that price and promotion are their primary motives for online shopping. Besides that, another additional pull factor towards online shopping is convenience, varieties of products, secure payment methods, and free deliveries. It is rather evident in reports by DataReportal (2019), indicating that the fashion and beauty category has cumulative spending of USD771 million in Malaysia's e-commerce market. With the boost of online apparel shopping globally, it is evident that there are plenty of opportunities that are available to develop and expand the online apparel shopping market.

In this study, apparel purchase is defined as the purchase of all types of clothing items, including men, women, and children above four years old outerwear, innerwear,

costumers, and workwear. Online apparel is also a subset of e-commerce where business and commercial activities are carried out using online to facilitate the purchase of apparel items through the use of websites of third parties. The electronic commerce had given a boost of development to consumers to buy online, and as mentioned previously, online apparel purchases had taken the lead in recent years. With 28.7 million online internet users in Malaysia, understanding the factors predicting consumers' intention to adopt and engage in internet transactions is crucial, especially in apparel shopping.

Although many previous types of research had explored the scope of online shopping, there have been limited comprehensive empirical studies on the online apparel shopping intention. Though generally, online shopping had been focusing on convenience and time saving, online apparel shopping is significantly different. The success of online apparel shopping relies on the attributes of apparel being marketed and that the adequacy that varies with the products offered. When it comes to online apparel, consumers need to touch, feel the material, and require a description of the garments. Purchasing these items also requires customer involvement, where customers able to physically examine the fabric, fitting, and colour of the garment. Besides, the choice of online apparel products differs by price, quality, and size (Kim et al., 2011). Due to these vast differences, the findings from previous researches focusing on online shopping or e-commerce may not be the same compared to the study of online apparel.

Apart from that, the role of a consumer's position is thought to be part of the consumer's decision- making and behavioural intention. According to Shwu-Ing (2003), four psychologically essential factors, including motivation, perception, belief, and attitude, affect the shopping behaviour of the individual. Among these, the attitude

of an individual while performing behaviour determines the intention. Yu and Wu (2007) demonstrated that consumers are more inclined to look for products and services on the internet when they develop a positive attitude towards online shopping. In line with that, the attitude serves as the link between the characteristics of the consumer and its needs to fulfill a behaviour (Shwu-Ing, 2003). In the context of online apparel, the importance of studying attitude can be seen from the past related studies, which reveal that attitude have a significant influencing factor towards online purchase intention (Delafrooz, 2009; Delafrooz et al., 2011; Meskaran et al., 2013). It can be asserted that high involvement purchases such as online apparel shopping are influenced by attitude compared to low involvement items. As such, attitude could be further analysed in online apparel shopping since it provides more room to influence consumers' decisions towards purchase intention (Putro & Haryanto, 2015).

Many previous studies have been conducted using traditional adoption models and theories, such as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to comprehend the factors influencing online shopping intention. Since the physical elements of touching, feeling, and even trying the product in traditional shopping are missing in online purchasing, the impact of attitude among the consumers would probably influence their intention towards apparel purchase. Furthermore, consumers are hesitant towards online shopping due to the sense of risk and the attributes of the product and services rendered. Moreover, online shoppers are also affected by the utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivation such as the enjoyment and time-saving factor for shopping. Pricing and the convenience factor of online shopping are anticipated to have some influence on online apparel purchase intention. Web experience may also affect the way transactions are performed and completed. Hence, in this research, the influence

of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) on online apparel shopping was investigated as the integration of these theories would be able to deliver a holistic, strong and solid foundation for the explanation and prediction of consumers' intention to shopping online. These theories will be explained in the literature review of this thesis.

This research intends to uncover a further understanding of consumer behaviour by carrying out a comprehensive investigation of online apparel shopping. Importantly, the exploration in the areas of online apparel purchase intention is very limited and scarce; thus, it is necessary to research further into the subject. This study will integrate perceived risk, convenience, hedonic motivation, utilitarian motivation, pricing, products and services attributes, web experience, attitude towards online apparel shopping, and purchase intention in a single model to grasp a holistic understanding of online apparel purchase intention in Malaysia.

With the influence of information technology in online apparel shopping, theories such as Technology Acceptance Model, and Theory of Planned Behaviour can explain and provide reliable instruments for this study and further advanced the understanding on previous studies by establishing few new relationships in the context of online apparel shopping through empirical evidence. The research has also validated the relationship of attitude in the online apparel context. Perhaps, this is the first study in Malaysia that explores the role of attitude as a mediator in online apparel purchase intention. Other than that, instead of focusing on a broad context, this thesis is more specific and intended to research online apparel shopping based on recent outstanding growth. The study has also engaged a robust data analysis for empirical testing.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

With the prevailing e-commerce market, the online apparel category has gained much attention from many fashion-related marketers and business units as many opportunities are lurking and much potential to embed in the retailing sector in Malaysia. According to DataReportal (2019), Malaysians had spent over USD771 million on the online fashion and beauty category in 2019. In fact, it was further stressed by Tham et al. (2019) that there is a promising trend in online spending behaviour among consumers in Malaysia. Through this, it is undeniable that the online market is continuously growing and, thus, providing enormous opportunities for retailers. Many companies might be left behind if the access to the broader consumer group not utilised extensively. Euromonitor (2019) opined that the fast development of online shopping had given rise to online apparel shopping in Malaysia.

The apparel category is the second largest e-commerce category in Malaysia, and perpetually, the increase in online apparel purchases has created a new challenge for online apparel companies to introduce better products and services that are directed to maximise profit and satisfy their consumers. Despite the popularity of online apparel among online shoppers, studies in this area remain scarce, and researchers have to explore the economic success of online apparel shopping. In this manner, it is pivotal to recognise the determinants that predict consumer's purchase intention towards online apparel that can be used to devise new business strategies in Malaysia.

The fast growth of e-commerce had led to the advancement of online shopping, whereby online apparel retailing store expansion took place actively in Malaysia. Business owners entered a paradigm shift to the online environment, and many online stores were built, such as Zalora, Fashion Valet, Dressabelle, DressMi, and many more. According to Statista (2019), Zalora is known as the leading online fashion