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## Article

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# How Social Advertising Affects the Buying Behavior of Malaysian Consumers? Testing the Moderating Effects of Gender and Education

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## Abstract

This study examines the influence of social advertising on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers along with the moderating role of gender and education. We use our own Primary data that were collected through questionnaire-based survey from the shoppers at various shopping malls of fashion clothing brands at Kuala Lumpur and State Johor in Malaysia. The collected data were analyzed by using step wise regression and correlation statistics to find results. The findings revealed that social advertising, informativeness, entertainment, credibility, ease of use, contents, and gender have positive effects on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers toward the fashion clothing brands. By contrast, we find negative effects of privacy and education. Next, we show that gender has moderating effects in the defined context. The main contribution of this study is the assessment of the effects of some unique and influential factors of social advertising on the buying behavior among Malaysian consumers towards the fashion clothing brands. In addition, this study has also assessed the moderating effects of gender and education to extend the body of knowledge in that area. Finally, we present practical implications for managers.

## Keywords

Social Advertising, Consumer Behavior, Gender, Education, Fashion Brands

## JEL Classification

M15, P46

## Introduction

The way of doing business has widely changed as the proliferation of social media has created new challenges and opportunities for brands around the world. The trend of social media and online business have arisen among communities (Rehman and Al-Ghazali, 2022; Stoklasa and Matušínková, 2022), and forcing marketers to apply new advertising strategies to engage customers (Gallaughier and Ransbotham, 2010; Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner, 2010). Specially, the social media platform has altered the contemporary marketing approaches and diverted advertisers to adopt social networking sites for aggressive customers engagement (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015; Klepek, 2018). It is widely accepted and preferable for building brand image (Spillecke and Perrey, 2012), powerful marketing tool (Duffett, 2015), causing to revise marketing strategies (Vinerean, Cetina, Dumitrescu and Tichindelean, 2013), and become a leading marketing platform around the globe (Elseminas, Wijanto and Halim, 2015; Coursaris, Osch and Balogh, 2016). For instance, Facebook had 2.5 million advertisers and 50 million small businesses in January 2016, earned \$ 5.4 billion in 2014 and its growth rate was expected up to 58 percent (Thornhill, Xie and Lee, 2017; Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, and Algharabat, 2017), emerged the concept of social advertising, and caught researchers' attention to understand consumers responses (Ertugan, 2016).

Notably, in digital landscape, the knowledge of social advertising in the context of consumers behavior is still exploratory and needs extensive understanding for better marketing strategies (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014). To date, the outset of social advertising and consumer behavior has received only limited attention, despite

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several exceptions, it is needed to get know the behavioral responses in various communities' and generations due to demographic and cultural differences (Kim and Ko, 2012; Chu, Kamal, and Kim, 2013; Boateng and Okoe, 2015; Çera and Tuzi, 2019; Bracíníková and Matušínková, 2020; Rehman and Al-Ghazali, 2022), towards advertising techniques. Particularly, in Malaysian society where the fashion clothing brands are facing very hard time (Rehman, 2019), and needs solid advertising strategies to understand and influence the buying behavior of consumers towards the fashion clothing brands for positive outcomes. The same is true about the unanswered role of gender and education as called for investigation by Rehman and Al-Ghazali (2022) to better understand the consumers characteristics for developing more influential and sales-oriented advertising strategies both for male and female as well as highly qualified and non-qualified consumers.

Following above arguments, the main objective of this study is to comprehensively examine the influence of social advertising on the consumers buying behavior towards the fashion clothing along with moderating role of gender and education. Particularly, 1) determining the relationship between social advertising and consumers buying behavior towards the fashion clothing; 2) evaluate the relative importance of the components of social advertising (informative, entertainment, credibility, ease of use, privacy, and contents) in the views of consumer preferences; 3) measure the moderating effects of gender and education on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

Precisely, this study examines the practice of fashion clothing brands who actively adopted social media as advertising platform, have jumped to social media bandwagon (Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Phan, Thomas, and Heine, 2011; Schwedt, Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012), to increase the boundaries of knowledge. As in the Malaysian society, the fashion clothing brands are in sales and marketing-oriented problems (Rehman, 2019), and searching for new marketing techniques and ways to influence the buying behavior of consumers. Further, the Malaysian society highly consists of diversity in term of racism (Malay, Chinses, Indian, Pakistani, Indonesian etc.), gender, and education, and there is a need to evaluate the moderating role of gender and education to create better understanding (Rehman and Al-Ghazali, 2022), in term of male and female as well as highly qualified and non-qualified consumers. Therefore, this research contributes to the prior literature by developing a comprehensive framework that indicates how social advertising influence on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers towards the fashion clothing brands along with the moderating role of gender and education. This study also contributes to identify the most influencing factors in social advertising (informative, entertainment, credibility, ease of use, privacy, and contents) to affect the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers toward the fashion clothing brands. For these purposes, this study uses a survey-based technique to collect data from the Malaysian consumers due to growing fashion trend and access to status-oriented goods in society. Results and implications of this study will be primarily helpful for practitioners to apply more relevant and applicable advertising strategies.

This study starts with a conceptual framework for social advertising, gender, education, and consumers buying behavior. Subsequently, this study describes and justifies the method of study conduction and analyze the results. A detail discussion of the findings of this study, implications, future directions, and managerial practices concludes in the study.

## **Theoretical Background**

### ***Theory of Reasoned Action and Technology Acceptance Model***

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the theory of reasoned action and technology acceptance model. Theory of Reasoned Action was introduced by Martin Fishbein and Lcek Ajzn in 1967, with the aim to assess relationship between attitudes and behaviors and was derived from the theory of attitude. It has been extensively used by researchers to understand the behavior of consumers (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). However, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have proposed two types of beliefs precursor in behavioral intentions that are: behavioral beliefs and normative beliefs. In addition, the technology acceptance model (TAM) was developed by Devis (1986), with the intentions of user's motivation in using technology and proposed several factors to explain model such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitude towards using the system (Chuttur, 2009; Hussein). The TAM model was introduced with the intentions to understand the adoption of new technology by individual, groups, and organization, based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), in the form of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude towards using the system, and behavioral intention to predict the actual usage of technology (Mortensona and Vidgen, 2016).

### ***Social Advertising***

Social media is "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Neti, 2011). It is the types of electronic communication where users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and others (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang and Johnson, 2014). Social media provides the opportunity to share social issues, product usage information, exchange ideas about a brand, and share experiences (Manyika et al., 2011). It has changed the style of communication among societies and is the form of podcasts, social blogs, weblogs,

news portals, internet forums, Facebook, Twitter, etc. to create a public sphere for communication (Ahmed, Kee, Mustafa, Ibrahim, Mahmud and Dafrizal, 2012). It has become a popular podium of social interactions among users around the world (Boateng and Okoe, 2015). Therefore, due to wide acceptance and attractive features, social media has become an advertising platform that is accessible via internet for everyone (Bajpai, Pandey and Shriwas, 2012), and has emerged the concept of social advertising as a new trend of marketing.

Social advertising is the process of gaining traffic towards social networking sites via contents to attract audience attention (Esther, Emmanuel, and Okey, 2015; Rehman, 2019). It is the newest internet based digital advertising system and has gained popularity around the globe due to the development of social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and other (Hadija, Croatia, and Barnes, 2012; Rehman, 2019). Advertising through social networking sites is often known as social advertising and is the paid form planned promotion of a business (Bakshy et al., 2012), and a source of promoting brands in cheaper cost (Chan, 2012; Esther, Emmanuel, and Okey, 2015). It became an ever-growing platform for advertising around the world (Soares and Pinho, 2014), and a customer centric communication system to get a cheerful response from targeted customers (Jothi, Neelamalar, and Prasad, 2011). Particularly, social advertising has become an interesting promotional trend in Malaysian society. The Malaysian Digital Association (2016) has highlighted its popularity and role in Malaysia and is considered as a source of brand recognition, enhance reputation, retain customers, sell products and to improve customer's services in the country. Parveen (2012) has investigated the websites of 860 companies in Malaysia and noted that 817 Malaysian companies of various sectors are using social media for marketing purposes.

### **Dimensions of Social Advertising**

#### *Informative*

The informative and features added advertisement have greater influence on the audience perceptions and possess value for consumers as the timely and accurate information's developing positive attitude towards advertisement (Aydın, 2016). Logan, Bright and Gangadharbatla (2012) have highlighted social advertising as a good source of providing timely, relevant, updated, completed information, and assumed as a convenient source of product information. The information of social advertising enhances the consumer's attitude toward ads and impact positively on their mind (Aydın, 2016).

#### *Entertainment*

The entertainment in social advertising is the "...the ability to fulfil an audience's needs for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional enjoyment and is the properties of being enjoyable, exciting, imaginative, and flashy" (Padmanabhan and Anand, 2015). Logan, Bright and Gangadharbatla (2012) have praised Facebook advertisements as a source of entertainment, enjoyment, pleasure, and excitement. It can satisfy the diversion of consumers, a cause of enjoyment, provide release from emotional stress, enhance the attitude positively (Thong, Hong, and Tam, 2006), and can increase the consumer's loyalty with brands (Aydın, 2016).

#### *Credibility*

Credibility of social advertising is the reliability and trusts in the advertisement message and is "a critical factor that affects advertisement on the internet" (Brackett and Carr, 2001). According to Yaakop, Anuar, Omar and Liung (2012) credibility of advertisement is "the extent to which the consumer believes or trusts in the media or advertising claims". The reliability and trustworthiness of advertisement can enhance the attitude of consumers toward social media advertisement (Aydın, 2016; Brackett and Carr, 2001).

#### *Ease of Use*

Social networking sites have caught attention of societies (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) around the world due to its interesting usage. Heinrichs, Sulim and Sooklim (2011) have highlighted the term ease of use in the sense of social networking sites as "the extent to which one believes that using a particular system will be free of effort. Ease-of-use in social networking sites implies that the user found a social networking site easy to operate and that the user did not need to expend effort on operating the social networking site to achieve his or her desired objective and observe or share the advertisement message with other". Perceived ease of use has impact on the user's attitude to accept the usage of technology and social media (Sago, 2013), has positive effects on the online shopping (Green and Pearson, 2011).

#### *Privacy*

Privacy is the ability to control the physical, interactional, psychological, and informational access to self or one's group in social media (Jung, 2017), is concerned with the personal information of users such as image, status, hobbies and other (Yaakop, Anuar, Omar and Liung, 2012). Lee and Hong (2016) have highlighted that Facebook users often concerned with its usage behavior, usage detail and their liking about contents and advertisement. Tan, Qin, Kim, and Hsu (2012) have described the issues of misuse and access of unknown parties to private and

personal information. However, some social networking sites have provided the facility to get setting in personal profile to solve the privacy issues such as Facebook (Yaakop, Anuar, Omar and Liung, 2012), as the privacy policies can increase the confidence of users to share personal information.

### *Contents*

The usage of social networking sites is increasing regularly due to user's interest. Facebook is continuously adding features to facilitate the advertisers in posting contents on the brand fan page to convey the business messages (Liesse, 2014). However, the concept of content is "*creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience to gain profit*" (Ahmad, Musa, and Harun, 2016). The content marketing is sharing the information regarding the products and brands to attract others to participate in purchasing activities that create the engagement relationship between consumers and the companies (Ahmad, Musa, and Harun, 2016).

### **Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior is the "*totality of consumer decision with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition off good, services, time and ideas by (human) decision making units*" (Gautam and Jain, 2008), and is the "*study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society*" (Elnaga and Abunayyan, 2016). The understanding in inner motives and buying behavior of consumers is important for advertisers to formulate better marketing and promotional strategies. Pelau (2011) has presumed that advertisers have keen interest in understanding the buying behavior of consumers to execute a valuable marketing campaign. However, Howard and Sheth (1969) have defined three major steps in the buying decision of consumers that are: a set of inner psychological motives, alternative sources of action and the decision mediators. The process also includes customer's satisfaction, repeat purchasing, and developing positive perception towards a product (Mitchell and Boustani, 1994).

### **The Moderating Role of Gender**

It may be an interesting contribution to evaluate the moderating role of gender on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers towards the fashion clothing brands. Gender is the socially constructed characteristics of men and women, and previous literature has widely noted that gender differences affect organizational strategies in various aspects. For example, Gefen and Straub (1997) have noted a considerable difference between male and female respondents in terms of email usage. Venkatesh and Morris (2002) have noted a difference among male and female while using the software at the workplace. Ono and Zavodny (2002) have noted a significant relationship between men and usage of internet as compared to usage by women. Nysveen et al. (2005) have conducted a study about mobile usage and observed a non-significant influence of gender in using mobile phone services.

In 2005, Ramayah and Osman have found that male students spent more time to use the course website as compared to female students. Stefanovic and Barjaktarovic (2020) have noted a moderating role of gender on the relationship between management structure and performance in the banking sector. Babalola and Nwanzu (2022) have observed a moderating role of gender on the relationship between self-monitoring personality traits and emotional labor strategies. However, previous studies have never been focused to examine the moderating role of gender on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers towards the fashion clothing brands. Therefore, this study has interest to assess the moderating role of gender on the relationship between social advertising and buying behavior of consumers.

### **The Moderating Role of Education**

Education is the key drive of development among societies and an important factor to be consider while formulating business strategies. Education is "*the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, provoke or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills or sensibilities as well as any learning that results from the effort*" (Cremin, Public Education). In this regard, this study is focusing to examine the moderating role of education on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior towards the fashion clothing brands. Lee and Hallak (2018) have investigated the moderating role of education between entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), innovation, and restaurant performance. Berrill, Hagan-Luff, and Stel (2020) have examined the moderating role of education in the relationship between FDI and entrepreneurial activity. Ertemel and Ammoura (2016) have assessed the relationship between social media advertising and consumers buying behavior. The study has noted that education level has insignificant effects on the buying behavior of consumers. However, previous studies have never been focused to examine the moderating role of education on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers toward the fashion clothing brands. Therefore, the authors of this study are interested to determine the moderating effects of education on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers toward the fashion clothing brands.

## Research Model and Hypothesis Development

A study of Okazaki and Taylor (2013) has explored the theoretical foundation of social media advertising to identify future research directions and noted three theoretical prospective (networking capabilities, brand image transferability, and personal extensibility) in reaching targeted customers via social networking sites, learn their behavioral response, and attitude towards social networking advertising. The study has advocated this conception in different cultures to get better understanding in the knowledge area. Al-Mukhaini, Al-Dhuhli, and Ismail (2015) have assessed the impacts of social media on consumer buying behavior and suggested to conduct a study in other countries. Ertemel and Ammoura (2016) have investigated the role of social media advertising on Turkish consumers' buying behavior in fashion retail industry and recommended marketing managers to understand the demographic factors of a society while formulating advertising strategies for social media. Hoy and Milne (2010) have evaluated the differences among gender, their privacy concerns, behavioral response, and personal information sharing behavior in the social networking sites advertisement.

Rehman, Ilyas, Nawaz and Hyder (2014) have assessed the effects of Facebook advertisement and Facebook environment on the young consumers buying behavior along with the moderating role of gender. Brahim (2016) has examined the impacts of online advertising (Facebook) on Tunisian consumer behavior along with the mediating effects of attitude towards online advertising on the relationship between perceived advertising value and consumer purchase intent. The study has advocated examining the effects of other variables on the relationship between the value of online advertising and buying intention. Mohammadpour, Arbatani, Gholipour, Farzianpour and Hosseini (2014) have examined the effects of social media marketing on the intentions to e-shopping of customers along with the mediating role of brand capital, relational capital, and value capital.

Concisely, this study has noted a gap of knowledge to examine the influence of social advertising on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers along with the moderating role of gender and education based on the theory of reasoned action and technology acceptance model in the fashion clothing brands industry. Hence, this study has developed a conceptual framework (Figure1), to determine the relationship among variables and achieve the aim and objectives of study. In this study, social advertising is proposed as independent variables, gender and education as moderating variable and buying behavior as dependent variable. Based on variables and previous literature, this study has developed some hypotheses which are explained as below.

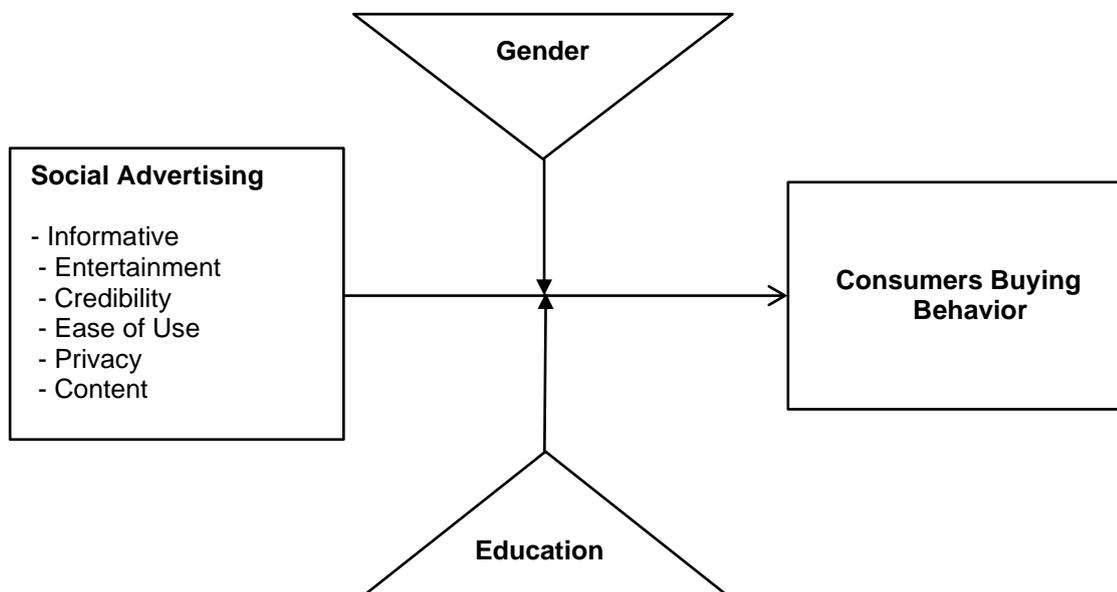


Fig. 1 Conceptual Model.

Advertising is the effective and efficient source to emotionally motivate the target audience to buy advertised products (Abideen and Saleem, 2011). Ertemel and Ammoura (2016) have assessed the role of social media advertisement on consumers buying behavior and noted that social media advertisement has an influence on consumers buying behavior in the fashion retail industry at Turkey. Barhemmati and Ahmad (2015) have examined the effects of social network marketing on the consumers purchase behavior through customers engagement among Malaysian consumers. Esfahani, Sardar and Kashani (2012) have assessed the relationship between digital media advertisement and buying of losing weight sports goods in Iran. The study has concluded that TV advertisement can influence consumers to purchase the sports goods in Iran. Virvilaite and Matuleviyiene (2013) have assessed the influence of shocking advertisement on Lithuanian consumers buying behavior and summarized

that shocking advertisement has influence on the buying behavior of consumers. So, this study has noted a space in literature and propose to evaluate the influence of social advertising on the consumers buying behavior among Malaysian consumers toward the fashion clothing brands. Therefore, we hypothesize in this study that:

H1: There is a positive relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

Previous literature has mentioned various factors of advertising which affects the buying behavior of consumers. Hashim and Zolkepli (2014) have examined the effects of mobile advertising messages contents with the intention of entertainment, informative, irritation and credibility on the purchase intentions of consumers. Alalwan (2018) has examined various factors in social advertising such as performance expectancy, habits, hedonic motivation, interactivity, informativeness, and perceived relevance to predict purchase intentions among Jordan consumers. Tashtoush (2021) have examined the effects of social media sites (in the context of source of information, interactivity, and credibility) on the consumers buying behavior in banking sector. Nwagwu and Famiyesin (2016) have assessed the mobile advertising acceptance among Nigerian consumers with the intention of entertainment, in-formativeness, credibility, personalization, and ubiquity. Wang and Sun (2010) have examined the role of beliefs (informative, entertainment, credibility, economy, and value) and attitude towards online advertising among USA and Romanian consumers.

Heinrichs, Sulim and Sooklim (2011) have assessed the influence of social networking sites in term ease of use on social media evaluation. Yuanxin and Pittana (2011) have assessed the influence of social media advertising (informative, entertainment, credibility, interactivity), psychographic factors (reference group, privacy concerns), and demographic factors (gender, age, and usage) on consumers attitude towards social media advertising in Sweden. Further, Rahman, Suberamanian, Zanuddin and Nasir (2017) have analyzed the contents of Facebook fan page in enhancing user's engagement with brands. The study has noted that contents of Facebook fan page can enhance user's engagement with brands. Likewise, He and Qu (2018) have noted an influence of social media advertising contents on the purchase intention of consumers. However, this study has noted a gap of literature and propose how social advertising (in the context informative, entertainment, credibility, ease of use, privacy, and contents) affects the Malaysian consumers buying behavior toward the fashion clothing brands and hypotheses in this study as:

H1A: There is a positive relationship between information in social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H1B: There is a positive relationship between entertainment in social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H1C: There is a positive relationship between credibility in social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H1D: There is a positive relationship between privacy in social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H1E: There is a positive relationship between ease of use in social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H1F: There is a positive relationship between contents in social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

Previous literature has mentioned various demographic factors which affects the buying behavior of consumers. Such as, Ertemel and Ammoura (2016) have assessed the relationship between social media advertising and consumers buying behavior. The study noted that gender and education level have insignificant effects on the buying behavior of consumers, but less focused to examine the moderating effects of gender and education on the relationship between social media advertising and consumers buying behavior. Rehman et al. (2014) have examined the influence of Facebook advertising on the young consumers buying behavior at Pakistan and noted that gender has negative but significant effects on the buying behavior of young consumers in Pakistan. Chen (2020) has assessed the impacts of gender on the consumers buying behavior and observed that male and female consumers have different search frequencies about products. Rehman and Al-Ghazali (2022) have also called for assessing the moderating role of gender and education in the defined context to further extend the body of knowledge in relevant area. Therefore, due to the gap of knowledge, we hypothesize in this study as:

H2: There is positive relationship between gender and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H3: There is moderating effects of gender on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H4: There is positive relationship between education and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

H5: There is moderating effects of education on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.

## Methods

This study has applied quantitative approach to collect data through questionnaire-based survey in the State Johor and Kuala Lumpur at Malaysia. The study has selected a sample of 384 respondents based on Krejcie-morgan-table to collect data for the study conduction. The sample size of 384 respondents is deemed appropriate when the population constitutes of millions (at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error) (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970; Erkan and Evans, 2016). The respondents were the shoppers at different malls of fashion clothing brands in Kuala Lumpur and the State Johor at Malaysia. They were the users of social media, fashion clothing brands, and had experience of social advertising of fashion clothing brands. The study applied convenient approach via the mall intercept approach to collect data in the third quarter of 2019. It was cleared to the respondents that the data will be used only for research and publication purposes.

The questionnaires were adopted from (Logan, Bright and Gangadharbatla, 2012; Lee and Hong, 2016; Soares and Pinho, 2014; Prendergast, Liu and Poon, 2009; Dinh and Mai, 2016; Tan, Qin, Kim and Hsu, 2012; Rauniar, Rawski, Yang and Johnson, 2014; Kirik, Arslan, Cetinkaya and Gul, 2015; Kim and Johnson, 2016; Wang and Tsai, 2017; Park, Kim and Forney, 2006; Anselmsson, Bondesson and Johansson, 2014; Rehman, 2019; Rehman and Al-Ghazali, 2022). The wordings of the questionnaire, its order, format, and appropriateness were refined accordingly. All the questions were close ended, and respondents were given options to mark which suits them the best. All the items were measured from the range; strongly disagree to strongly agree. After data collection, the study used SPSS to assess the reliability of instrument, correlation statistics among variable and testing the developed hypothesis. A stepwise regression was used to determine the influence of independent variables and assessing the moderating effects.

**Table.1** Percentage Description of Demographic Variables.

S. No	Demographic Variable	Percentage	
1	Gender	Male	39.2%
		Female	60.8%
2	Age	21-30 years	80%
		31-40 years	16%
		41-50 years	4%
3	Income	RM 2000 & below	65%
		RM 2001-4000	25%
		RM 4001-6000	10%
4	Education	HSC	5.9%
		Bachelor	88.2%
		Master	3.9%
		PhD	2%

Respondents were included 39.2 percent male and 60.8 percent female. In term of age, 80 percent consumers were from the group of 21-30 years of age, 16 percent were from 31-40 years of age and 4 percent were from 41-50 years of age. Based on sample, it can be said that in Malaysian society the younger consumers are more active in searching for the fashion clothing brands in shopping malls as compared to senior citizens. It can also be inferred that perhaps younger consumers are more active users of social advertising and have keen interest in the promotions of fashion clothing brands. In term of income, 65 percent consumers were from RM 2000 & Below income group, 25 percent consumers were from RM 2001-4000 income group and the remaining were from RM 4001-6000 income group. In term of education, 5.9 percent respondents were from HSC education group, 88.2 percent were with bachelor, 3.9 percent with master and 2 percent with PhD. Based on data, it can be said that in Malaysian society, majority of the consumers have bachelor level of education or perhaps highly qualified consumers are not so interested or have no time to visit the shopping malls of fashion clothing brands.

## Results

The study used SPSS to assess the accuracy of instrument. In the first step, the study focused to validate the items to get more accurate and better results. For the reason, the study assessed confirmatory analysis, means, skewness, kurtosis, and Cronbach Alpha. Results indicate that all the items have high factor loading, its values lie in the acceptable range of skewness and kurtosis and having high reliability (greater than 0.70). Table 2 shows the

values of factor loading, means, skewness, kurtosis, and Cronbach Alpha.

**Table 2.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Means, Cronbach Alpha.

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Means	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach Alpha
Social Advertising	Social advertisement is a good source of fashion clothing information	.817	4.14	-.782	.635	.815
	Social advertisement provides updated information of fashion clothing products	.811	4.22	-.284	-.749	
	Social advertisement is a convenient source of fashion clothing information	.725	4.29	-.846	.558	
	Social advertisement provides complete information of fashion clothing products	.702	3.75	-.529	.256	
	Social advertisement provides beneficial information of fashion clothing products	.769	4.00	-.298	-.312	
	Social advertisement provides entertainment	.773	3.90	-.293	-.403	
	Social advertisement is exciting	.827	3.94	-.125	-.909	
	Social advertisement makes me happy	.863	3.67	-.132	-.489	
	Social advertisement stimulates my imagination	.785	3.86	-.766	.960	
	Social advertisement provides relief from a stressful life	.886	3.65	-.469	-.517	
	I feel that the claims made in social advertisements are credible	.645	3.61	-.064	-.618	
	Social advertisements are trustworthy	.801	3.22	-.339	-.352	.844
	Social advertisements are believable	.815	2.98	-.140	.399	
	Social advertisements convince me positively	.831	3.49	-1.145	2.070	
	Social advertisements are sincere	.844	3.08	-.600	-.120	
	I am concerned that my online usage behavior might be known to others while I use the social media	.729	3.84	.903	-.327	.924
	I am concerned that my social media usage details might be known to other users	.868	3.98	-.551	-.237	
	I am concerned that my friends might learn about my liking in the social media advertisement	.526	3.73	-.546	.000	
	I am concerned that my private information on social media may be misused	.813	3.90	-.658	-.018	
	I am concerned that the unknown parties may have access to my private information on social media	.831	4.14	-1.325	2.350	.784
	I think, social media is flexible to interact with others	.560	4.12	-.484	-.268	
	I think, social media is easy to do what I want to do	.814	4.06	-.440	.308	
	I think, it's easy to become skillful in the usage of social media	.747	4.10	-.501	.454	
	I think, it is easy to use social media	.822	4.24	-.719	.311	
	Social media is understandable to interact with others	.722	4.18	-.239	-.806	
	I often follow the contents of social advertising	.781	3.24	-.162	-.654	
	The contents of social advertising describe the functions of fashion clothing brands	.848	3.57	-.336	-.360	
	The contents of social advertising are valuable	.851	3.61	.102	-.259	.851
The contents of social advertising are beneficial	.811	3.80	.092	-.143		
The contents of social advertising enhance my emotions to purchase	.744	3.61	-.251	-.518		
I buy fashion clothing without planning	.672	3.02	.035	-.653		
Buying Behaviour	I buy fashion clothing for enjoyment	.809	3.16	-.310	-.773	.846
	I buy fashion clothing with a group of friends	.707	3.08	-.155	-.910	
	I always buy unique fashion dress	.868	2.82	.089	-.947	
	I always buy fashion clothing of latest trends	.769	2.90	-.091	-.939	
	I am willing to pay a higher price for fashion clothing brand	.689	2.63	.270	-.768	
	Buy fashion clothing brand would improve the way I am perceived	.518	3.25	-.127	-.602	

In addition, Table 3 provides information's about correlation between variables, means and standard deviation. Standard deviation shows variation from the mean values here all the values indicate normal variation in the data. The analysis of correlation matrix indicates that informative is positively correlated with entertainment (.683\*\*), credibility (.343\*), ease of use (.307\*), privacy (.529\*\*), content (.603\*\*), gender (.419\*\*), consumer buying behavior (.111) and negatively correlated with education (-.166). Entertainment is positively correlated with credibility (.489\*\*), ease of use (.269), privacy (.294\*), contents (.716\*\*), gender (.124) and consumer buying behavior (.318\*) and negatively correlated with education (-.241). Likewise, credibility is also positively correlated with ease of use (.315\*), privacy (.250), contents (.522\*\*), consumer buying behavior (.443\*\*) and negatively correlated with gender (-.094) and education (-.032). At the same time, ease of use is also positively correlated with privacy (.415\*\*), contents (.208), gender (.081), education (.061) and consumer buying behavior (.097). Privacy has also positive correlation with contents of social advertising (.322\*\*) but negatively correlated with gender (-.143), education (-.102) and consumers buying behavior (-.058) in the fashion clothing industry at Malaysia. Further, contents of social advertising have positive correlation with gender (.029), education (.030) and consumer buying behavior (.207) in the fashion clothing industry at Malaysia. Likewise, gender is positively correlated with education (.133) and consumer buying behavior (.324\*). Finally, education is also negatively correlated with the buying behavior of consumers (-.053) in the fashion clothing industry of Malaysia.

Table 4 provides information about stepwise regression to assess the developed hypothesis. For the direct effects among variables, results of step wise regression indicate that social advertising, informative, entertainment, credibility, ease of use, contents and gender have positive while privacy and education have negative influence on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. At the same time, social advertising, entertainment, credibility, and gender have significant effects while informative, ease of use, privacy, contents, and education have insignificant effects. Likewise, credibility, entertainment in social advertising and gender have greater influence on Malaysian consumers' behavior in the fashion clothing industry as compared to other factors. In the second step, social advertising, gender have positive while education has negative influence on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry at Malaysia.

**Table 3.** Correlation Statistics.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	INF	ETR	CRD	EOU	PRV	CON	GEN	EDU	BB
Informative	4.078	.58934	1								
Entertainment	3.803	.74457	.683**	1							
Credibility	3.264	.69920	.343*	.489**	1						
Ease of Use	3.917	.68138	.307*	.269	.315*	1					
Privacy	4.137	.52686	.529**	.294*	.250	.415*	1				
Content	3.564	.69017	.603**	.716**	.522*	.208	.322*	1			
Gender	1.61	.493	.025	.124	-.094	.081	-.143	.029	1		
Education	5.02	.424	-.166	-.241	-.032	.061	-.102	.030	.133	1	
Consumer Behavior	2.980	.88018	.111	.318*	.443*	.097	-.058	.207	.324*	-.053	1

**Note:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). INF - Informative, ETR - Entertainment, CRD - Credibility, EOU - Ease of Use, PRY - Privacy, CON - Content, GEN - Gender, EDU - Education BB - Buying Behavior

In the third step, social advertising has positive effects on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry of Malaysia. For assessing the moderating effects, here the first interaction term (product of social advertising and gender) has positive and statistically significant effects while the second interaction term (product of social advertising and education) has negative and insignificant effects on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. Results of stepwise regression indicate that gender has moderating while education has non-moderating effects on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. Therefore, this study accepts all developed hypothesis except H1D, H4 and H5.

**Table 4.** Results of the Stepwise regression (Hypothesis Testing).

Hypothesis	Beta I	Beta II	Beta III	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard Error	T-Value	Sig	Decision
H1	.279	.245	.132	.78	.59	.259	2.012	.050	Accepted
H1A	.111			.012	-.008	.212	.782	.438	Accepted
H1B	.318			.101	.082	.160	2.344	.023	Accepted
H1C	.443			.196	.180	.164	3.425	.001	Accepted
H1D	-.058			.003	-.017	.238	-.408	.685	Rejected
H1E	.097			.009	-.011	.184	.684	.497	Accepted
H1F	.207			.043	.023	.178	1.479	.146	Accepted
H2		.335		.190	.155	.238	2.549	.014	Accepted
H3			.362	.187	.153	.062	2.516	.015	Accepted
H4		-.024		.078	.039	.292	-.169	.866	Rejected
H5			-.011	.078	.039	.086	-.045	.965	Rejected

## Discussion

This study has measured the influence of social advertising on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers along with the moderating role of gender and education towards the fashion clothing brands. Results of step wise regression indicated that social advertising, informative, entertainment, credibility, ease of use, contents and gender have positive while privacy and education have negative influence on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers. At the same time, social advertising, entertainment, credibility, and gender have significant effects. Surprisingly, informative, ease of use, privacy, contents, and education have insignificant effects. Results have shown that gender has moderating while education has non-moderating effects on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing industry. Therefore, based on the outcomes of this study, it can be imagined that social advertising is widely perceived as a source of entertainment equally among male and female consumers. It can also be envisioned that social advertising is equally accepted as a reliable advertising system among male and female consumers in Malaysian society.

Based on results, it can be inferred that social advertising provides good, updated, complete and beneficial information of fashion clothing to Malaysian consumers. It may be a convenient source of fashion clothing information and provides entertainment, stimulate consumer's imagination, and provides relief from a stressful life. It may be a source of credible and trustworthy information to positively convenience Malaysian consumers towards the fashion clothing brands. It may be a flexible source of interaction and Malaysian consumers may easily use it to get interesting information's of fashion clothing brands. It can also be said based on results that advertiser may use valuable and attractive contents in social advertising to enhance the emotion of Malaysian consumers toward the fashion clothing. In addition, based on the outcomes of this study, perhaps the fashion clothing brands are not developing more informative contents in social advertising equally for highly qualified and non-qualified consumers. Perhaps the non-qualified consumers are searching for more informative contents and cannot access to the detailed information in an easy way which affect their interest in social advertising towards the fashion clothing brands.

The managerial prospective of the study was to test whether social advertising has any relationship with the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. It was also the part of this study to test whether gender and education moderates the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. This study is in line to Dehghani and Tumer (2015) who have examined the effectiveness of social media advertisement in enhancing the purchase intentions of consumers in Cyprus. This study is in line in the sense of social media advertisement and its influence on the purchase intention of consumers. This study is in context with Rehman et al. (2014) who examined the influence of Facebook advertisement on the buying behavior of Pakistani consumers along with the moderating role of gender. The study has collected data through questionnaire-based survey in Pakistan and analyzed the collected data through step wise regression. This study is closely in line in the sense of social advertising effects on the buying behavior of consumers along with moderating effects of gender.

In addition, the results of this study are parallel to Yuanxin and Pittana (2011) who investigated the influence of social media advertising (informative, entertainment, credibility, interactivity), psychographic factors (reference group, privacy concerns), and demographic factors (gender, age, and usage) on consumers attitude towards social media advertising in Sweden. But the results of this current study are unique in term of evaluating the moderating role of gender and education and evaluating the effects in a step wise series. This study is in line with Rehman et al. (2017) who assessed the influence of personal factors (market maven, stability, open minded and agreeable) on the buying behavior of Pakistani consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. However, the results of the current study are unique as compared to inline study due to assessment of consumers response towards modern digital landscape along with personal characteristics.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

This current study adds and responded to the call of previous inline study (Rehman and Al-Ghazali, 2022) by evaluating the moderating role of gender and education on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of consumers towards the fashion clothing brands. The study clarified that gender has moderating while education has non moderating role in the defined context. This study also adds in the previous inline study (Rehman, 2019) by clarify the role of gender and education to enhance understanding in the consumers buying behavior towards the fashion clothing brands. The study also adds in (Rehman, 2019) by extending clarification in the highlighted problem in the Malaysian fashion clothing brands industry. This current study adds in the theory of reasoned action and the technology acceptance model by developing a theoretical framework in the context of social advertising, consumers buying behavior, gender, and education and validating it based on the findings from emerging economy. Particularly, this study contributes to the technology acceptance model by evaluating the male and female as well as qualified and non-qualified consumers response towards digital advertising landscape.

## Policy Implications

The results of the study have important implications for marketing research and policy makers to define more influential advertising strategies that can equally influence the male and female as well as highly qualified and non-qualified consumers. The policy makers and the marketing experts can focus to develop more informative contents in social advertising that can be equally helpful for male and female consumers. The policy makers and marketing managers can add more useful contents in social advertising that can equally guide the highly qualified and non-qualified consumers in an easy way towards buying the fashion clothing brands. Therefore, the credible and informative contents in social advertising have the advantages to release the stress of buying process among consumers, provide interesting and easy buying experience, and leads to achieve the marketing objectives in the fashion clothing brands industry. However, the results have clarified that gender and education are the important aspects to be considered as a part of marketing strategy to reach out male and female as well as highly qualified and non-qualified consumers in more accurate way and fulfil the business objectives in a specific society.

The findings of the current study imply that the firms can focus their efforts on social media advertising, gender, and the combination of these variables to enhance the buying behavior of both qualified and non-qualified consumers and increase the market share of the fashion clothing brands in a particular country. The tactics in social advertising and promoting brands to create image among males and females' consumers mind would be helpful in a particular market of fashion clothing brands industry. The regular advertising and two ways communication through social media may be helpful to create the brand loyalty, access to market updates, guide and clarify consumers perceptions, and consumers may not find any opportunity to be convinced by competitors. By developing two ways communication and applying some unique selling strategies that better suit to the qualified and non-qualified consumers of a particular market of fashion clothing goods may lead them to be perceived as a market leader and a top brand among communities. The informative and credible contents through social media may provide the opportunity of entertainment, make clear the business message among targeted customers, and positively enhance their purchase intentions.

## Conclusion

This study contributes to the prior literature by evaluating the influence of social advertising on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry along with the moderating effects of gender and education. This study contributes to the relevant literature by merging social advertising, consumers buying behavior, gender, and education based on the findings from emerging economy. This study contributes by highlighting the role of social advertising in enhancing the buying behavior of both male and females as well as qualified and non-qualified consumers toward the fashion clothing brands. However, this study has applied quantitative approach to collect data through questionnaires-based survey form the consumers in shopping malls at the State Johor, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and applied SPSS to analyses the results. The results have shown that social advertising and gender have positive and statistically significant influence while education has negative and non-significant influence on the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. Results have shown that gender has moderating while education has non-moderating effects on the relationship between social advertising and the buying behavior of Malaysian consumers in the fashion clothing brands industry. However, while interpreting results, it should be kept in mind that data used in this study were limited only to two states of Malaysia. Therefore, readers need to be cautious in generalizing the results.

To further enrich the analysis, we therefore recommend that future research should include other variables like price, brand image for assessing the moderating and mediating effects. Further, the study was limited to fashion clothing brands industry of Malaysia only and future research can be conducted in other services and manufacturing sectors in various cultural settings. The effects of other variables along with social advertising, such as sales promotion, cultural factors, business model innovation, can enhance the buying behavior in different way and bring different shape of results. In addition, the application of the theory of planned behavior, AIDA model, and black box model could also be an interesting contribution.

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