

Relationship Between Social Media, Price, Brand Image, Attitude, and Social Factors Towards Artificial Product Purchase: A Study Among Higher Learning Institutions Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, cases related to artificial products have become one of the phenomena that attract the attention of many people in most countries. An artificial product can easily be found, just to meet the needs and wants in their lives. Concerning that, this study aims to measure the level of purchasing artificial products and their correlation with related factors to social media, price, brand image, attitude, and social factors. This study collects data quantitatively through a survey that covers the population, including students of three TVET higher education institutions in the northern zone of Peninsular Malaysia. A total of 137 responses were received, and only 134 responses were analyzed in descriptive and correlational analysis. Descriptive analysis has shown a high level for all variables, while the correlation test has shown a significant and positive relationship between social media, brand image, attitude, price, and social factors, towards artificial product purchasing. The results of the study have enlightened us towards understanding the development level of purchasing factors in Malaysia. Several recommendations have been made for future studies.

Keywords: Artificial Products, Social Media, Price, Brand Image, Attitude,

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Artificial goods are products created or marketed under another brand without the owner of the trademark's consent, and they are frequently of inferior quality. By presenting the goods as manufactured by the brand owner, the seller of such items may violate the owner's patent, trademark, or copyright. This is because every aspect of the goods is perfectly replicated, and dealers who sell artificial goods tend to target consumers who are less cautious when making purchases. Some dealers sell counterfeit goods using real prices because many consumers are deceived and end up making purchases. According to Lai and Zaichkowsky (1999), an artificial product is defined as a product that is a complete replica of a high-value brand that is manufactured.

In order to find out what motivates individuals to purchase fake goods, a customer survey was carried out based on earlier research by Basu et al. (2015). Numerous participants expressed that they purchase branded products due to their concern for quality rather than brand loyalty. Customers continue to desire low-cost imitations when they cannot buy real goods, particularly from well-known companies. Malaysia is classified among nations like Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar that do not place a high priority on intellectual property. These nations are still the primary hubs for the transit of manufactured products.

For businessmen, product imitation causes them to lose their good name and consumer trust

in the company (Ene & Mihaesu, 2014), the cost of research and product development has no added value, and legal costs increase (Kramer, 2014), and the reduction of company profits. From the consumer's perspective, the existence of artificial products causes consumers to hesitate to buy original products (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). In the era of the latest technology, many people buy artificial products even in other countries. This is because many users emphasize the factor of personal appearance compared to the artificiality of a product. For some consumers, they only buy the product to be styled on social media only, this results in many irresponsible sellers printing many artificial items due to high demand.

Artificial products are sold not only online, but some parties sell artificial goods at shops. This attracts many customers to buy it due to the price factor. Most traders take the opportunity to open boutiques when the festive season arrives. This is because many people are looking for clothes or goods for Eid preparations, so irresponsible traders will sell the products at collapse price. The production and sale of artificial products are a never-ending issue and becoming an increasingly serious problem in the market.

The main problem related to artificial products involved various aspects for consumers in terms of health and safety. While the effect on entrepreneurs are the value of brand equity and loss of total demand, whereas on the economy and government, there will be loss of taxes and integrity issues. The rise of artificial products in our markets has sparked serious concerns for everyone involved. For consumers, these products can bring potential health and safety risks. Studies showed that the synthetic ingredients and chemicals used in many artificial items might lead to unexpected health issues (Smith et al., 2021). For entrepreneurs, the situation is no better—artificial products can harm brand equity and diminish demand for genuine offerings, putting businesses at risk (Jones & Roberts, 2022). Moreover, from an economic standpoint, the government faces challenges such as lost tax revenue and issues related to product integrity when artificial goods flood the market (Kumar, 2023).

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the level of selection of artificial products among students in the northern zone and the correlation between the purchasing factors, whether they concern about artificial products or, and whether there is a correlation between variables.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid development in the field of information technology has had a comprehensive effect on the world community, including in the field of marketing. This is also one of the reason for the increase in the selection of artificial goods that attract buyers to buy artificial products. It is said that irresponsible sellers take the opportunity to imitate the original product brand by setting a low price. Cases of artificiality in Malaysia are increasing. Therefore, buyers choose artificial products. At the same time, the sale of artificial goods in certain places openly by traders shows that this business still has a place among consumers. This is because there is still a demand for artificial products from consumers, which leads to the supply of such products in the market. This causes consumers to prefer artificial products. (Ahmad, Perumal & Shaari, 2015). There are five (5) factors below related to the selection of artificial products such as social media, price, brand image, attitude, and social factors.

2.1 Social Media

The first factor is social media. In this era of globalization, most users use social media to make purchases because social media provides convenience to users on every purchase made. This is due to the ease of obtaining information on social media at the moment, including information on makeup, skincare, and so on (Suryani & Apriani, 2022). Social media can remind consumers about products available in the market, and social media can inform consumers about the latest trends. Therefore, it can be suggested that the hypothesis to be

studied is as follows;

H1: There is a positive relationship between social media towards purchasing artificial products.

2.2 Price

The second factor is price. According to Jakuil and Garangon (2019), formal users will consider price as a benchmark of product or service quality, and in general, they will evaluate the cost in terms of the benefits obtained through the purchase of the product. The expensive price given to the original product caused the artificial product to become the focus because they realized that the artificial product was cheaper than the original product. Therefore, it can be suggested that the hypothesis to be studied is as follows;

H1: There is a positive relationship between price towards purchasing artificial products.

2.3 Brand Image

The third factor identified is the brand image. According to Ahmad, Perumal, and Shaari (2015), well-known luxury brand products usually attract the interest of manufacturers to be used as imitation products because they want to take advantage of their high-value brands. According to Jakuil and Garangon (2019), a brand is not simply a symbol of physical identity. A brand is a perception or experience that shapes the relationship between the public and the owner of the brand. This includes all products available in the market. A well-known brand or having a strong name in the market will have an impact on consumers or buyers. In addition to having a brand, consumers can also distinguish a product or service. A person's desire to have luxury products but less in terms of income leads them to buy artificial products for their satisfaction. Even if it is artificial, many people are satisfied with buying this artificial at a cheap price and still feel like using an expensive product. Therefore, it can be suggested that the hypothesis to be studied is as follows;

H1: There is a positive relationship between brand image towards purchasing artificial products.

2.4 Attitude

The next factor is attitude. Most people buy artificial products because they prefer to use artificial products just to increase their social status even though they know that the quality of artificial products is lower than the original products. Muhamad and Nordin (2019) that attitudinal factors influence consumer purchases of artificial products. Researchers explained that materialistic consumers will have the desire to buy imitation products from luxury brands. Here we can see that most consumers buy artificial branded products simply because they want to be seen as luxurious. A study by Zulkipili, Mazlan, Mohammad & Mohamad Rasid (2023) stated that for the sake of fashion, people prefer to buy and wear artificial products. Therefore, it can be suggested that the hypothesis to be studied is as follows;

H1: There is a positive relationship between attitudes towards purchasing artificial products.

2.5 Social Factor

Finally, social factors. The majority of customers use artificial items as a result of recommendations or comments from others, particularly those who use the product and are close to them. Umami Kalsom and Nurbaiti (2019) assert that family members have the power to affect consumer behavior because they provide a setting in which people can grow,

develop, and build their personalities. Therefore, it can be suggested that the hypothesis to be studied is as follows;

H1: There is a positive relationship between social factors towards purchasing artificial products.

2.6 Research Conceptual Framework

The discussion in the literature related to variables has provided understanding in the development of the research framework. Accordingly, the research conceptual framework is summarized in Figure 1 below.

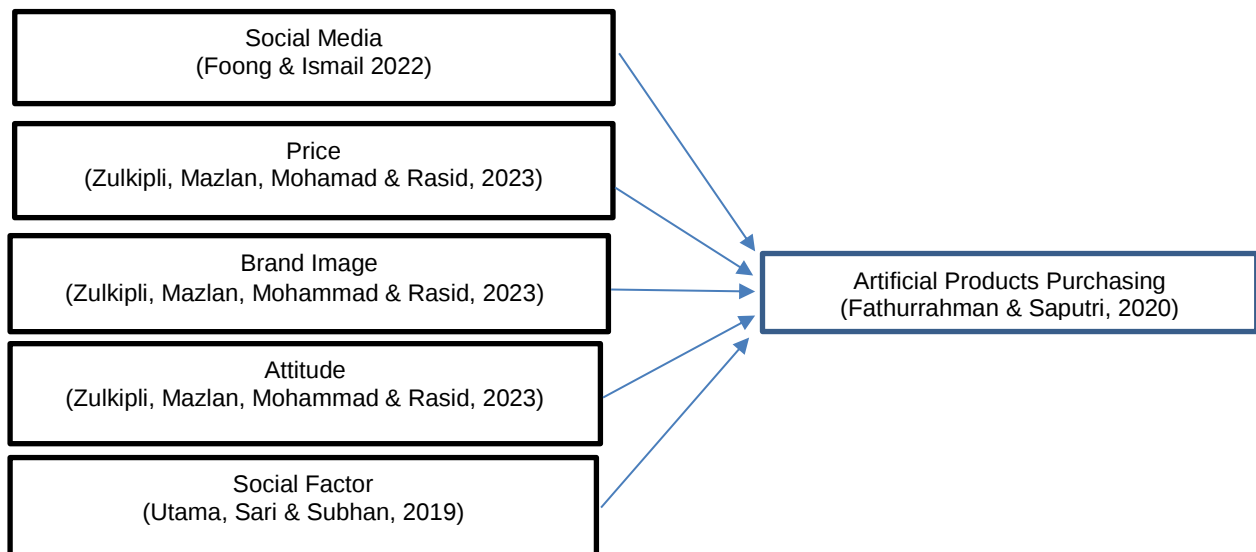


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework

The research conceptual framework acts as a guide and structure that supports the study. The formation of a research framework and hypothesis is very important in determining the variables that have a relationship between purchasing factors towards artificial products. Based on the research framework above, this study was conducted to examine the existence of a direct relationship between the variables of brand image, attitude, price, social factor, and social media.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses quantitative research methods to collect information and data through a 'Google form'. Data will be collected from three different higher learning institutions, which are Polytechnic Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (PTSS), Polytechnic Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (POLIMAS) and Polytechnic Seberang Perai (PSP). The objective of this study is to determine the factors that influence the selection of artificial products among consumers, where this objective is a correlational analysis of the study.

This study was conducted using a quantitative research approach. To obtain the information needed in this study, questionnaire is used and distributed using strata random sampling. This questionnaire contains seven sections where section A, is a demographic data question. Part B until Part G contained questions related to the variables to be studied.

The total population of this study obtained from the three institutions was 11,332 students from semester one to semester five, and the sample size was 370 respondents as recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). From the sample size, only 174 responses, of which only 134

forms are eligible to be analyzed. Research measurements have been made on the dependent variable, which is purchasing artificial products, and also the other five independent variables, which are brand image, attitude, price, social factor, and social media. The items measured for all variables were taken and adapted from previous studies. While the items to measure the respondents' demographics have been self-developed. The items include gender, age, and ethnicity of the respondent, semester, and institution.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows the characteristics of respondents consisting of gender, age, race, semester and institution. All of the characteristics mentioned are found in the demographic section.

Table 1: Demographic of Respondents

Bil	Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	72	52.6
		Female	65	47.4
2	Age	18-19	24	17.5
		20-21	107	78.1
		22-23	5	3.6
		24 above	1	0.7
3	Race	Malay	105	76.6
		Chinese	13	9.5
		India	17	12.4
4	Semester	1	26	19
		2	10	7.3
		3	18	13.1
		4	14	10.2
		5	69	50.4
5	Institutional	PTSS	59	43.1
		POLIMAS	34	29.2
		PSP	40	24.8

The table above contains demographic details of respondents, including gender and ethnicity. Based on the table, it has shown that the gender percentage is 52.6 percent of males and 47.4 percent of females. Furthermore, in the ethnic category, it has shown that 76.6 percent are Malay, 9.5 percent are Chinese, and Indian with 12.4 percent.

4.1 Reliability Testing

Reliability tests are conducted to show the level of reliability of all items and constructs used as a measurement tool in the study. Regarding that, the level of reliability of the items and constructs used are shown through two tests that have been carried out, namely during the pilot test and also in the actual study. Table 2 below shows the results of the reliability test through Alpha Cronbach analysis.

Table 2: Alpha Cronbach Value for Reliability Test

Num	Variable	Alpha Value n=20	Alpha Value n=134	Pallant (2007)
1	Artificial Product Purchasing	0.808	0.777	Approve
2	Social Media	0.876	0.881	Approve
3	Price	0.852	0.614	Approve
4	Brand Image	0.947	0.774	Approve
5	Attitude	0.952	0.766	Approve
6	Social Factor	0.969	0.864	Approve

In the pilot test, the Alpha Cronbach value for the reliability test of the dependent variable, artificial product purchasing, was 0.808. For the independent variables, social media has a value of 0.876, price (0.852), brand image (0.947), attitude (0.952), and social factor value is 0.969. Further, in the actual data study test, the alpha value for artificial product purchasing was 0.777. For the independent variables, the social media alpha value is 0.881, price is 0.952, brand image value is 0.970, attitude is 0.781, and lastly, social factor is 0.979. It can be concluded that all the items used as measurement tools are at a good level of reliability, with the lowest value exceeding 0.60 as suggested by Pallant (2007).

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 3 below shows the results of the descriptive analysis through the mean value with mean interpretation by Landel (1997).

Table 3: Result of Descriptive Analysis and Interpretation

Num	Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Landel (1997)
1	Artificial Product Purchasing	1	5	3.825	High
2	Social Media	1	5	4.023	High
3	Price	1	5	3.818	High
4	Brand Image	1	5	3.117	Medium
5	Attitude	1	5	3.034	Medium
6	Social Factor	1	5	2.873	Medium

Note: Used of 5-point Likert scale

For the dependent variable, which is artificial product purchasing, the mean value was 3.825, where the respondents agreed that they are intended towards artificial products. The independent variable that has the highest mean value is social media (4.023); second is price (3.818); third is brand image (3.117); fourth is attitude (3.034); and lastly is social factor (2.873). Social media has been reaching the highest level of agreement, followed by price and third artificial product purchasing, as suggested by Landel (1997).

4.3 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

This section discusses the relationship between independent and dependent variables, namely the level of artificial product selection, social media, price, brand image, attitude, and social factors. This analysis can provide an understanding of the relationship between these variables, whether there are relation to the collation value results. Table 4 shows the results of the correlation analysis through the mean value with correlation strength interpretation by Pallant (2007).

Table 4: Correlation Analysis and Interpretation

Num	Variable	Artificial Product Purchasing	Correlation Strength Pallant (2007)
1	Artificial Product Purchasing	1	High
2	Social Media	.456**	High
3	Price	.430**	Moderate
4	Brand Image	.396**	Moderate
5	Attitude	.322**	Moderate
6	Social Factor	.176*	Low

Note: ** significant correlation at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

* significant correlation at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

In this study, the significance level of Pearson's correlation (r) as suggested by Pallant (2007) was used to determine the correlation and linear strength of the relationship between the variables involved. With that, the results of the obtained correlation analysis have indicated that the three independent variables have a significant and positive relationship with artificial product purchasing. The correlation value of the relationship between artificial product purchasing and the variables involved is at a high level for social media ($r = .456$). A study by Duffett (2017) found that social media marketing significantly influences consumer purchase intentions. The research highlighted that social media platform provides valuable interactions that enhance consumer engagement and loyalty, leading to higher purchase intentions. The second factor is price, which has a moderate correlation ($r = .396$). A study by Grewal et al. (2018) demonstrated that price perceptions significantly affect consumer purchase intentions.

The research emphasized that perceived fair pricing enhances the attractiveness of products and increases purchase likelihood. Third is brand image ($r = .430$). According to a study by Islam and Rahman (2016), brand image positively affects consumer purchasing behavior. The study found that a positive brand image enhances consumer trust and satisfaction, leading to a higher likelihood of purchasing. Fourth is attitude ($r = .396$). Research by Kim and Johnson (2016) indicated that consumers' attitudes towards a product significantly influence their purchase intentions. Positive attitudes towards artificial products are crucial for driving purchase decisions. Finally, the social factor ($r = .176$) has a low correlation. According to Arli et al. (2018), who found that while social influence plays a role in consumer decisions, its impact may be less significant compared to other factors such as brand image and price.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

This study was conducted with two main objectives. The first objective of the study was achieved through descriptive analysis. Through the analysis, it was found that the level of purchasing artificial product intention among students of TVET Higher Education Institutions in Northern Peninsular Malaysia is at a high level. In addition, the level of social media factor and price are also at a high level. Nevertheless, the other variables, such as brand image, attitude, and social factors, are at the medium level.

This gives us a clear indication that social media has become a bigger influence on purchasing intention. The study demonstrated that students at TVET Higher Education Institutions in Northern Peninsular Malaysia have a strong inclination to purchase artificial products. This aligns with worldwide patterns that showed a growing consumer preference for artificial products, which is influenced by social media and pricing strategies. Social media has a significant impact on purchasing intentions, as evidenced by research conducted over the past five years. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok provide visibility to new items and trends through ads and influencer endorsements. Statista (2020) reports an upward trend in social media advertising spending, indicating its growing importance in marketing tactics. Social media can boost product awareness, enhance perceived value, and build trust through user-generated content, reviews, and interactive engagements. Duffett's (2017) study revealed that social media marketing significantly influences young consumers' purchasing intentions by promoting brand interaction and loyalty. Price sensitivity significantly influences students' purchasing decisions due to their financial constraints. Competitive pricing influences their choices. A study by Kang and Johnson (2015) suggested that social media price promotions can increase customer interest and purchases, especially among budget-conscious individuals. The medium influence of brand image, attitude, and social factors is less significant than social media and price, as younger consumers are more experimental and less brand loyal. Solomon et al. (2019) found that while brand image and social factors like peer influence play a role, the immediacy and engagement offered by social media platforms can overshadow these elements. According to Kumar and Reinartz's (2016) research, the medium level of attitude influence among students can be attributed to a pragmatic approach. This approach prioritises functionality and cost-effectiveness over brand

prestige. The research suggests that practical considerations often outweigh attitudinal loyalty when it comes to low-involvement purchases.

Furthermore, the second objective of the study is achieved through correlation analysis. Through the analysis, it was found that there is a significant and positive relationship at a high level for all the hypotheses that have been tested. The relationship between social media and artificial product purchasing intention has shown the highest level compared to the relationship between brand image, attitude, price, and social factors towards artificial product purchasing. It can be concluded that issues related to purchasing artificial products, such as social media influence among students in TVET educational institutions, are at a high level. Other than that, brand image, attitude, and price are at moderate level, while social factors are at low-level correlation. The study demonstrates that social media has a substantial impact on students' inclination to buy artificial products in TVET educational institutions, corroborating recent research that emphasised the escalating effect of social media on consumer behaviour. Kapoor et al. (2018) conducted research that demonstrates the substantial impact of social media on client purchasing decisions. The website enables customers to exchange their experiences and ideas, which subsequently impacts the purchasing choices of their friends, particularly among students who primarily depend on social media for information and suggestions. Brand image is the perception and impression of consumers towards a brand, including its reputation, identity, and associations. Attitude, on the other hand, refers to the feelings, beliefs, and evaluations consumers hold towards a brand. Social media has a significant impact on purchasing decisions, but brand image and customer attitude have a moderate influence. Research by Liu, Perry, and Papamichail (2019) supported the notion that social media influence takes precedence over brand image and consumer views, which shape the overall perception of a product. Social factors such as peer influence and society norms exhibit a weak association with purchasing intentions. This phenomenon may be attributed to the dynamic character of consumer behaviour among younger age groups, who tend to place greater reliance on social media influencers and online reviews compared to conventional social influences. Smith et al. (2020) found that the digital era has caused a change in the sources of social influence, moving it from close social circles to larger online groups and influencers.

There are several implications resulting from this study. From a theoretical point of view, this study has provided a better empirical understanding of artificial product purchasing. The findings of this study support the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991) in identifying purchasing intention and its relationship with several related constructs. Clearly, this study has shown the existence of a significant direct relationship between social media, brand image, attitude, price, and social factors with the artificial product purchasing intention. From a practical point of view, this study has implications for educational institutions in improving students' understanding on the impact of artificial product purchasing. Educational institutions or governments should provide information and education about dangerous artificial products and their effects to students or people out there. Every individual should be able to distinguish between artificial and genuine products to avoid any fraud, or losses and to avoid getting harm. Finally, sellers of original goods can also increase their sales by asserting the stated legal rights. Sellers can also control the production rights of artificial products to preserve the brand image. This can help traders in promoting their brand without any imitation or fraud from irresponsible parties.

Despite the existence of a significant relationship between all research constructs and artificial product purchasing intention, the use of the Theory of Planned Behavior is still limited. Further research should focus on behavior towards social media in depth. These guide future research in understanding real consumer behavior regarding the intention to purchase artificial products.

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