

NAVIGATING CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS: ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK FEATURES IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA

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ABSTRACT

In 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak changed consumers' traditional buying behaviour to online shopping behaviour using social media platforms that provide online shopping features such as Facebook. Due to the shift in purchasing methods, most businesses and companies were forced to change their strategies in approaching customers. Even though several studies have proven that Facebook features positively affect consumers' purchase intention, existing empirical evidence is largely grounded in the pre-COVID-19 context, leaving uncertainty regarding whether these relationships remain valid in the post-pandemic digital environment. Addressing this gap, the present study offers novel post-COVID empirical evidence by reassessing the effectiveness of key Facebook features and advancing theoretical understanding through the combined application of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Influence Theory (SIT). Therefore, the main objectives of this research were to identify the impact of Facebook ads, the number of likes, the

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sharing feature, and friends' recommendations on consumers' purchase intention in the post-COVID-19 context. The study employed a quantitative approach comprising a survey. Data were collected via a questionnaire involving 400 respondents from the three largest divisions in Sarawak; Kuching, Miri, and Sibu. By integrating UGT and SIT, this study explains how functional media gratifications and social influence mechanisms jointly shape consumer purchase intention in a post-crisis digital marketplace. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze respondents' characteristics, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 27.0 was employed to examine relationships among the study variables. The results indicate that Facebook ads, number of likes, and friends' recommendations have a significant and positive relationship with consumers' purchase intention, while the sharing feature shows a negative relationship. These findings provide new theoretical insights into changing consumer responses to social media features after COVID-19 and offer practical guidance for businesses and policymakers seeking to optimize post-pandemic digital marketing strategies.

Keywords: Online shopping; Social-media platform; Facebook features; Purchase intention; Post COVID-19

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become integral to daily life, facilitating communication, information sharing, and online engagement while increasingly serving as influential marketing channels that shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Ahmed et al., 2025; Haris Fadzilah et al., 2025; Kapoor et al., 2018). Among platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, Facebook remains one of the most widely used globally, offering interactive features including advertisements, reactions, sharing functions, and peer recommendations that enable businesses to combine informational content with social interaction (Kemp, 2023; Ramos et al., 2019). From a marketing perspective, Facebook's interactive features enhance firms' ability to engage consumers and influence purchasing decisions (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021; Musonera & Weber, 2018). Previous studies (Mas'od et al., 2019; Yasmin & Khanam, 2022) found that Facebook advertisements, likes, and friends' recommendations positively affect purchase intention. However, much of this evidence was generated before the COVID-19 pandemic, when consumer behavior, platform usage, and digital dependency differed considerably from current conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift from traditional retail to online and social commerce as movement restrictions and health concerns increased reliance on digital platforms for information search, product evaluation, and purchasing decisions (Eger et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2021; Laato et al., 2020). Although Facebook usage expanded during this period, it remains unclear whether the effects of specific Facebook features on purchase intention have persisted, weakened, or evolved in the post-pandemic environment (Miah et al., 2022). This uncertainty presents an important research issue for both scholars and practitioners seeking to understand contemporary

digital consumption behavior. Despite the growing body of social media marketing research, limited empirical evidence examines the post-COVID effectiveness of individual Facebook features. Existing studies frequently assume the continued applicability of pre-pandemic behavioral models, overlooking potential changes in user trust, content fatigue, algorithmic exposure, and online social interaction. Consequently, marketers may continue to rely on assumptions that no longer accurately reflect consumer behavior in the post-pandemic marketplace.

To address this gap, the present study draws on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Influence Theory (SIT). UGT explains how individuals actively engage with media to satisfy informational, social, and psychological needs, whereas SIT emphasizes the influence of social norms, peer recommendations, and interpersonal cues on decision-making. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for examining how Facebook features both satisfy user motivations and shape purchase intention through social influence mechanisms in the post-COVID context.

In Malaysia, digital transformation initiatives such as the Post COVID-19 Development Strategy (PCDS) 2030 further emphasize digitalization, innovation, and sustainable economic growth (Ahmed et al., 2026). Understanding the influence of Facebook features on consumer purchase intention therefore holds both academic and practical relevance within this policy environment. Accordingly, this study re-examines the effects of Facebook advertisements, number of likes, sharing features, and friends' recommendations on consumers' purchase intention in the post-COVID-19 era. By providing updated empirical evidence, extending the application of UGT and SIT, and offering practical implications for marketers and policymakers, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the evolving digital marketplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the key concepts and theoretical foundations underpinning the study. It examines consumer purchase intention within social media marketing and evaluates how Facebook features, advertisements, likes, sharing functions, and friends' recommendations influence consumer decision-making. The review further draws on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Influence Theory (SIT) to establish the study's theoretical foundation.

2.1. Uses of Gratification Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains why individuals actively select media channels and features to satisfy informational, social, and psychological needs (Chavez et al., 2020). Unlike traditional media theories that portray audiences as passive recipients, UGT views users as active participants who seek specific gratifications such as information acquisition, entertainment, social interaction, and decision support (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000).

Within social media environments, UGT has been widely applied to explain engagement with platform features rather than platforms themselves (Azam, 2015). Facebook users interact with advertisements, likes, shares, and recommendations based on the gratifications these features provide (Menon & Hr, 2021). However, much of the existing UGT literature predates COVID-19 and may not fully reflect post-pandemic changes in consumer trust, motivations, and digital engagement (Hashim & Ahmed 2026; Ahmed & Hashim, 2022; Bahfiarti & Arianto, 2022). Consequently, reassessing UGT within the post-COVID context remains necessary.

2.2. *Theoretical Grounding of Facebook Features under UGT*

UGT provides a useful lens for explaining consumer engagement with Facebook features. Advertisements satisfy informational and utilitarian needs by providing relevant product information and supporting purchase decisions. Likes offer social and psychological gratifications through perceived credibility, reassurance, and collective approval. Sharing functions fulfill self-expression and social interaction needs by enabling users to communicate content aligned with their identities and values. Friends' recommendations address trust-based and relational needs by reducing uncertainty and perceived purchasing risk. Accordingly, UGT explains not only whether Facebook features influence purchase intention but also why consumers actively engage with these features during decision-making.

2.3. *Social Influence Theory (SIT)*

Social Influence Theory (SIT) explains how attitudes and behaviors are shaped by social norms, interpersonal influence, and group expectations. The theory emphasizes mechanisms such as compliance, conformity, and internalization in determining behavioral outcomes (Kelman, 1958; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In social media environments, these mechanisms are reinforced through visible indicators of peer approval and engagement, making SIT particularly relevant for understanding how Facebook users respond to social cues when forming purchase intentions (Akar et al., 2015).

2.4. *Conceptual Integration of SIT and Facebook Features*

Facebook features operate as social influence mechanisms consistent with SIT. Likes serve as normative signals of collective approval that may encourage conformity-based judgments (Wei et al., 2019). Sharing behavior provides informational influence by signaling content relevance and credibility. Friends' recommendations represent a stronger form of interpersonal influence because they originate from trusted social relationships. Meanwhile, Facebook advertisements combine firm-generated promotional messages with social cues embedded within the platform environment. Through SIT, consumer purchase decisions can be understood as outcomes of both personal evaluation and social influence processes (Lim, 2022; Yi et al., 2021).

2.5. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness or likelihood to purchase a product or service within a given period (Ahmed et al., 2026). It reflects consumers' desire and readiness to buy specific offerings and is widely used as an indicator of marketing effectiveness and future purchasing behavior (Mas'od et al., 2019; Peña-García et al., 2020). Consequently, purchase intention serves as an important measure for evaluating the effectiveness of online marketing activities.

2.6. Facebook Ads

Facebook advertisements are paid promotional messages delivered through the Facebook platform. They enable businesses to target consumers based on demographic, geographic, behavioral, and interest-related characteristics (Lutfie & Marcelino, 2020). In addition to promoting products and services, Facebook advertisements facilitate customer interaction and feedback collection (Das et al., 2018). Prior studies indicate that Facebook advertisements positively influence purchase intention (Mas'od et al., 2019). Similarly, Yasmin and Khanam (2022) reported a positive association between Facebook advertisements and consumers' purchase intention.

2.7. Number of Likes

The "Like" feature is one of Facebook's most widely used engagement mechanisms. The number of likes received by a post often functions as a visible indicator of popularity, credibility, and social approval. Consumers may perceive highly liked content as more trustworthy and influential. Empirical findings support this relationship, with Mas'od et al. (2019) reporting a significant positive association between the number of likes and purchase intention ($p < 0.01$).

2.8. Sharing

Facebook's sharing feature allows users to distribute content, product information, and business-related posts across their social networks. Through sharing, product-related information can reach a wider audience and potentially influence purchasing decisions. Mas'od et al. (2019) found that sharing positively affects purchase intention, while Yasmin and Khanam (2022) identified sharing as the most influential Facebook feature based on standardized coefficient estimates.

2.9. Friends' Recommendation

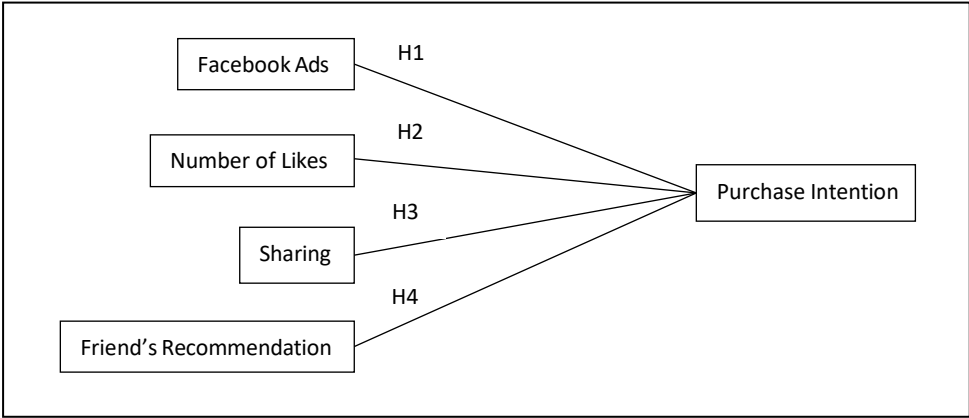
Friends' recommendations refer to product or service suggestions communicated through personal relationships. Recommendations from friends are generally perceived as more credible than those from unfamiliar sources because of existing trust and social ties (Hu et al., 2019; Liang et al., 2021; Broeder & Hout, 2019). Such recommendations reduce uncertainty and increase confidence in purchase decisions (Rao et al., 2021; Jacobsen, 2018). Consistent with this argument, Mas'od et al.

(2019) reported a significant positive relationship between friends' recommendations and purchase intention.

2.10. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is adapted from Mas'od et al. (2019) and Yasmin and Khanam (2022) and is supported by UGT and SIT. UGT explains how Facebook features satisfy consumers' informational, social, and psychological needs, thereby influencing purchase intention. SIT complements this perspective by explaining how social interactions and peer influence embedded within Facebook features shape consumer decision-making. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for examining the effects of Facebook advertisements, number of likes, sharing features, and friends' recommendations on purchase intention.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Mas'od et al. (2019) & Yasmin and Khanam (2022)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative, descriptive research design to examine the influence of Facebook features on consumers' purchase intention in the post-COVID-19 era among undergraduate students at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Data were collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms.

The target population comprised undergraduate students at UNIMAS who actively use Facebook. A convenience sampling technique was employed, whereby respondents were selected based on accessibility (Obilor, 2023). This approach was considered appropriate given the large population size and the study's focus on active Facebook users (Taherdoost, 2022). According to UNIMAS records, the undergraduate student population in 2023 was 14,801. Using the Krejcie and Morgan

sampling method, the minimum required sample size was estimated at 370 respondents. Participation was voluntary, and only students who completed the online questionnaire were included in the final sample. Collecting data directly from respondents helped ensure that findings reflected participants' perspectives rather than researcher assumptions.

3.1. Instrument Development

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire consisting of two sections. Section A gathered respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, ethnicity, monthly income, and frequency of Facebook usage. Nominal measures and a Cantril ladder scale were employed where appropriate. Section B measured the study variables and was divided into four constructs: Facebook advertisements, number of likes, sharing, and friends' recommendations. Each construct was measured using four items. Table 1 presents the adapted measurement items and their original sources, including Mas'od et al. (2019), Hajli (2014), Erkan and Evans (2016), and Dodds et al. (1991). Minor wording modifications were made to align the items with the Facebook platform and post-COVID-19 context while preserving their original conceptual meaning. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1: Measurement items for Section B

Variable	Item Code	Adapted Item
Purchase Intention	PI1	I am interested to try the product or service that has a lot of positive feedback on Facebook.
	PI2	There is a high possibility that I will purchase the product or service that recommended on Facebook.
	PI3	I will search for opinions on the product or service that I want to purchase on Facebook.
	PI4	The product or service that is sold on Facebook affects my intention to buy.
Facebook Ads	FA1	I pay attention to the ads on Facebook.
	FA2	I bought product that are promoted on Facebook before.
	FA3	I am likely to buy products that are promoted on Facebook.
	FA4	I desire to buy products that are promoted on advertisements on Facebook.
Number of Likes	NL1	I pay attention to the number of likes a product has.
	NL2	I evaluate the products or services based on the number of likes received on Facebook.
	NL3	I will be more likely to purchase a product or service that receives more likes on Facebook.
Sharing	SR1	I actively observe the products and services shared on Facebook.

Friend's Recommendation	SR2	I use the “share” feature to deliver posts or information that I want others to see.
	SR3	I felt excited when I share a post or information on Facebook.
	FR1	I will refer to my friend's recommendation when purchasing on Facebook.
	FR2	I feel confident when my friend recommends a product or service on Facebook.
	FR3	I am interested in the products or services that are recommended by my friends on Facebook.
	FR4	I will most likely purchase the products or services recommended by my friends on Facebook.

3.2. Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales (George & Mallery, 2020).

To examine the relationships between Facebook features and purchase intention, multiple regression analysis was employed, as it allows for the assessment of the individual and collective influence of independent variables on the dependent variable (Grant et al., 2018). Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted to evaluate the strength and direction of associations among variables prior to regression testing (Mukaka, 2012). All statistical tests were performed at a 95% confidence level.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An online questionnaire was employed to facilitate efficient data collection from a large respondent pool. The measurement items were adapted from established studies, and the collected data were used to examine the influence of Facebook features on consumers' purchase intention.

4.1. Data Screening

Data screening was conducted to ensure data quality and suitability for subsequent analyses (Huebner, 2020). A total of 370 responses were collected and analyzed using SPSS. Missing values, variable distributions, and potential outliers were examined prior to hypothesis testing. Outlier analysis was performed to enhance data robustness. Univariate outliers were identified using standardized Z-scores, with values exceeding ± 3.29 classified as extreme. Multivariate outliers were assessed using Mahalanobis distance at $p < 0.001$. Eight cases were identified as outliers and removed, resulting in a final sample of 362 respondents. No influential outliers remained that could significantly distort the results, and all retained cases met the assumptions required for multivariate analysis (Lemonaki, 2021).

4.2. Normality Test

Table 2: Descriptive Statistic for Each Variable

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Purchase Intention	3.49	0.956	-0.381	-0.113
Facebook Ads	2.68	1.091	0.294	-0.726
Number of Likes	3.76	1.027	-0.705	-0.015
Sharing	3.24	1.142	-0.231	-0.806
Friend's Recommendation	3.59	1.019	-0.544	-0.119

Normality was assessed using the full dataset of 370 responses prior to outlier removal. As shown in Table 2, purchase intention recorded a mean of 3.49 (SD = 0.956). Among the independent variables, the number of likes reported the highest mean ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.027$), followed by friends' recommendations ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.019$), sharing ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.142$), and Facebook advertisements ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.091$). The skewness values ranged from -0.705 to 0.294, while kurtosis values ranged from -0.806 to -0.015. Specifically, purchase intention recorded skewness and kurtosis values of -0.381 and -0.113, respectively. Facebook advertisements reported values of 0.294 and -0.726, number of likes recorded -0.705 and -0.015, sharing recorded -0.231 and -0.806, and friends' recommendations recorded -0.544 and -0.119. Based on the criteria presented in Table 2, purchase intention, Facebook advertisements, and sharing exhibited near-symmetrical distributions, while number of likes and friends' recommendations were moderately negatively skewed. All kurtosis values were negative, indicating relatively flatter distributions. Overall, the skewness and kurtosis statistics remained within acceptable ranges (Mishra et al., 2019), supporting the assumption of normality for subsequent analyses.

4.3. Reliability Test

Table 3: Summary of Reliability Test

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Purchase Intention	4	0.851
Facebook Ads	4	0.871
Number of Likes	3	0.842
Sharing	3	0.827
Friend's Recommendation	4	0.920

According to **Table 3**, the dependent variable of this study, purchase intention's Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.851. For independent variables, the friend's recommendation has the highest Cronbach's Alpha value, which is 0.920, indicating that it has excellent internal consistency and is reliable. Next, Facebook ads recorded a 0.871 and the number of likes recorded a 0.842 of Cronbach's

Alpha value. Lastly, the sharing has the least Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.827. This means all three variables have good internal consistency and are also reliable.

4.4. Descriptive Analysis

4.4.1. Frequency Distribution

As 362 of the respondents' data are confirmed to be usable after removing the outliers, their demographic information will be analyzed in this section. **Table 4** shows the total of usable respondents' data, with an overall response rate of 100% as all 362 respondents have answered the questionnaire. Hence, there is no missing or incomplete value.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Questionnaire Response

Questionnaire	Number of respondents
Distributed	370
Collected	370
Missing	0
Outlier(s)	8
Total usable responses	362

4.4.2. Respondents' Demographic Information

Table 5: Frequency of Respondents' Demographic Information

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	120	33.1
	Female	242	66.9
Age	18-21	186	51.4
	22-25	171	47.2
	26-29	4	1.1
	30 and above	1	0.3
Education level	Pre-University	12	3.3
	Diploma	4	1.1
	Degree	346	95.6
	Other	0	-
Monthly income level	Less than RM 300	251	69.3
	RM 300 - RM 500	49	13.5
	RM 600 - RM 800	28	7.7
	RM 900 - RM 1100	17	4.7
	RM 1200 or above	17	4.7
How often do you use Facebook?	Once daily	157	43.3
	2 to 5 times a day	127	35.1
	6 to 9 times a day	40	11.0
	10 times and above	38	10.5

Table 5 presents the demographic characteristics of the 362 respondents. Female respondents constituted the majority of the sample (66.9%), while males accounted for 33.1%. Most respondents were aged between 18–21 years (51.4%) and 22–25 years (47.2%), indicating that the sample primarily comprised young adults. In terms of educational background, the majority were undergraduate degree students (95.6%), with only a small proportion consisting of pre-university and diploma students. Regarding monthly income, most respondents reported earning less than RM300 (69.3%), reflecting the student-based nature of the sample.

With respect to Facebook usage, 43.3% of respondents reported accessing Facebook once daily, followed by 35.1% who used the platform between two and five times per day. The remaining respondents reported higher usage frequencies, indicating that the sample consisted largely of active Facebook users.

4.4.3. Descriptive for Each Variables

Table 6: Descriptive Statistic of Each Variable

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Purchase Intention	3.52	0.926	-0.333	-0.156
Facebook Ads	2.70	1.083	0.286	-0.715
Number of Likes	3.79	1.001	-0.676	-0.049
Sharing	3.28	1.117	-0.239	-0.756
Friend's Recommendation	3.63	0.980	-0.505	-0.107

Following the removal of eight outliers, the final sample consisted of 362 respondents. As shown in Table 6, purchase intention recorded a mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.926). Among the independent variables, the number of likes remained the highest-rated feature (M = 3.79, SD = 1.083), followed by friends' recommendations (M = 3.63, SD = 0.980), sharing (M = 3.28, SD = 1.117), and Facebook advertisements (M = 2.70, SD = 1.083).

The skewness values ranged from -0.676 to 0.286, while kurtosis values ranged from -0.756 to -0.049. Specifically, purchase intention recorded skewness and kurtosis values of -0.333 and -0.156, respectively. Facebook advertisements recorded values of 0.286 and -0.715, number of likes recorded -0.676 and -0.049, sharing recorded -0.239 and -0.756, and friends' recommendations recorded -0.505 and -0.107. Overall, only minor changes were observed following outlier removal, and the distributional characteristics of the variables remained largely unchanged.

4.5. Pearson Correlation

Table 7: Correlation between Variables

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient	Relationship
Purchase Intention and Facebook Ads	0.638**	<0.01
Purchase Intention and Number of Likes	0.578**	<0.01
Purchase Intention and Sharing	0.561**	<0.01
Purchase Intention and Friend Recommendation	0.654**	<0.01

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to **Table 7**, the correlation coefficient (r) between purchase intention and the friend's recommendation has the strongest correlation strength or strongest relationship as its correlation coefficient is 0.654 with a significant level of <0.01. In the second place, the correlation coefficient between purchase intention and Facebook ads is 0.638 with a significant level of <0.01. This means that the correlation between these two variables is strong. Then, the correlation coefficient between purchase intention and the number of likes is 0.578, and for purchase intention and sharing, the correlation coefficient is 0.561 with both having a significant level of <0.01. Although these two relationships have a lower correlation coefficient compared to the previous variable, both are still considered moderate correlation strength.

4.6. Multi-Linear Regression

Table 8: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.757 ^a	0.573	0.568	0.60844

a. Predictors: (Constant), FR, FA, NL, SR

b. Dependent Variable: PI

According to Zach (2021), R is the correlation between the predictor variable and the dependent variable, where R Square is the amount of response variable's variation that the regression model's predictor variable is liable for. As R Square clarified the amount by which the range of one variable contributes to the variation of the other variable, 0.573 of R Square value indicates 57.3% of variations of the variables in consumers' purchase intention is explained by Facebook ads, the number of likes, sharing, and the friend's recommendation. Adjusted R Square is a rectified goodness-of-fit to measure the linear models. An adjusted R Square of 0.568 indicates that 56.8% of the independent variable contributes to the model's explanatory power. On the other hand, the standard error of the estimate is used to roughly estimate the size of the prediction mistake and for this study, the standard error of the estimate is 0.60844.

Table 9: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. ^b
1	Regression	177.539	4	44.385	119.896	<0.01
	Residual	132.159	357	0.370		
	Total	309.698	361			

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), FR, FA, NL, SR

The sum of squares is a statistical method for calculating the dispersion of the data points (Rayat, 2018). It is used to find the function that corresponds most by removing the smallest amount of variation from the data. According to **Table 9**, the total sum of squares is 309.698, with the combination of regression (177.539) and residual (132.159). According to Vijalapuram (2019), the df stands for degrees of freedom, it is the number of independent variables. On the other hand, residual df means the entire dataset observations excluding the number of variables being estimated. The df for regression is 4 since there are only 4 independent variables, and the residual df is 357. The mean square is calculated by dividing the sum of squares by df for both regression and residual. Hence, the mean square for regression is 44.385 and 0.370 for residual. Next, F can be used to test the hypothesis that the independent variable's slope is 0.

Table 10: Coefficient^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.783	0.138		5.657	<0.001
FA (Facebook Ads)	0.296	0.038	0.346	7.710	<0.001
NL (Number of Likes)	0.199	0.041	0.215	4.832	<0.001
SR (Sharing)	0.050	0.041	0.060	1.225	0.221
FR (Friend's Recommendation)	0.282	0.048	0.298	5.867	<0.001

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), FR, FA, NL, SR

According to **Table 10**, Facebook advertisements recorded the highest standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.346$), indicating the strongest influence on consumers' purchase intention. This was followed by friends' recommendations ($\beta = 0.298$), number of likes ($\beta = 0.215$), and sharing ($\beta = 0.060$). The unstandardized coefficients (B) indicate that a one-unit increase in Facebook advertisements, friends' recommendations, number of likes, and sharing would increase purchase intention by 0.296, 0.282, 0.199, and 0.050 units, respectively. In terms of statistical significance, Facebook advertisements, number of likes, and friends' recommendations demonstrated significant positive relationships with purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). Conversely, the sharing feature was not statistically significant ($p = 0.221$), leading to the rejection of the corresponding hypothesis. The findings suggest that informational and social influence features, particularly Facebook

advertisements and friends' recommendations, play a more prominent role in shaping consumers' purchase intention than content-sharing behavior among the sampled respondents.

4.7. Hypothesis Testing

Table 11: Hypotheses Results

	Hypotheses	p-value	Result
H1	Facebook advertisements have a significant positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.	and<0.001	Accepted
H2	The number of likes has a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.	<0.001	Accepted
H3	The sharing feature has a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.	0.221	Rejected
H4	The friend's recommendation has a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.	<0.001	Accepted

H1: Facebook advertisements have a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which posits that individuals actively engage with media platforms to satisfy informational and utilitarian needs. The significant relationships observed suggest that Facebook features facilitating information access, interaction, and social engagement provide functional gratifications that enhance purchase intention. These findings are consistent with prior studies highlighting the role of social media features in shaping consumer decision-making (Jayasingh, 2019; Mas'od et al., 2019).

According to **Table 11**, H1 was accepted, indicating that Facebook advertisements have a significant positive influence on consumers' purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with the hypothesis proposed in Chapter 2 and aligns with previous studies (Mas'od et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Facebook advertisements provide accessible and relevant product information that facilitates purchase decision-making. The result also reflects the increasing effectiveness of digital marketing in the post-COVID-19 environment, where consumers rely heavily on online platforms for product information and purchasing activities (Adan & Ramos, 2023). Consistent with Fang (2020), social media advertisements enable businesses to strengthen brand visibility and consumer engagement, thereby enhancing purchase intention.

H2: The number of likes has a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.

According to **Table 11**, H2 was accepted, indicating that the number of likes has a significant positive influence on consumers' purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). This finding supports the proposed hypothesis and is consistent with previous research (Mas'od et al., 2019; Yasmin & Khanam, 2022).

The finding suggests that the number of likes functions as a social endorsement cue that enhances the perceived credibility and popularity of products or services. From the perspective of Social Influence Theory (SIT), consumers may interpret high numbers of likes as indicators of collective approval, reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in purchase decisions. Consequently, visible social approval serves as an important determinant of purchase intention within social media environments.

H3: The sharing feature does not have a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.

The non-significant effect of the sharing feature suggests that passive social endorsement may not function as a strong purchase driver within the sampled context. From a Social Identity Theory (SIT) perspective, sharing behavior reflects group identity signaling rather than direct consumption motivation. In a relatively homogeneous student population, such identity signaling may be less differentiated, reducing its influence on purchase intention. This interpretation is consistent with prior research that found sharing behavior to be context-dependent rather than universally influential (e.g., Kaur et al., 2019; Zell & Moeller, 2018).

According to **Table 11**, H3 was rejected, indicating that the sharing feature does not have a significant positive influence on consumers' purchase intention ($p = 0.221$). This finding differs from previous studies, particularly Yasmin and Khanam (2022), who identified sharing as one of the most influential Facebook features affecting purchase intention.

One possible explanation is the changing social media behavior of younger consumers (Halim et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that younger generations increasingly prefer platforms such as Instagram and TikTok over Facebook (Perrin & Anderson, 2019), potentially reducing their engagement with Facebook's sharing function. Furthermore, evolving platform algorithms and concerns regarding privacy and online self-presentation may have reduced the effectiveness of content sharing as a source of consumer influence (Bakar & Zaini, 2022; Seven et al., 2023).

H4: The friend's recommendation has a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.

According to **Table 11**, H4 was accepted, indicating that friends' recommendations have a significant positive influence on consumers' purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). This finding supports

the proposed hypothesis and is consistent with previous studies (Mas'od et al., 2019; Adan & Ramos, 2023).

Among the examined Facebook features, friends' recommendations emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase intention, highlighting the importance of interpersonal trust and social influence in consumer decision-making. Consistent with Social Influence Theory, recommendations from trusted social ties are perceived as more credible than firm-generated promotional content, thereby reducing perceived risk and increasing purchase confidence. Similar findings were reported by Sabri (2019), who emphasized the role of peer interaction and social influence in shaping purchasing behavior. Overall, the findings demonstrate that Facebook advertisements, number of likes, and friends' recommendations remain influential determinants of purchase intention in the post-COVID-19 environment, while the effectiveness of the sharing feature appears to have diminished among younger consumers.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter will further discuss the findings shown in Chapter 4, and the execution and conclusion of this research will also be presented. In the Discussion of Findings, the researcher will focus on elaborating on the results of the hypothesis stated in the previous chapter, the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables, and the comparison between the literature review. For Implication, the researcher will explain the value of this study to future research and guidance for further investigation. In Limitation, the weakness of this study will be explained along with some recommendations that can be used for future research.

5.1. Summary of Research Findings and Discussion

This study examined the influence of social media marketing factors on consumers' purchase intention within the context of UNIMAS. Rather than reiterating statistical outcomes, the conclusion synthesizes the findings to provide a conceptual understanding of how social media engagement, informational content, and interactive features shape consumer decision-making. The findings indicate that social media platforms function not merely as promotional tools but as interactive environments where trust, perceived value, and social influence collectively drive purchase intention. These insights extend existing literature by demonstrating how social media marketing effectiveness operates within a university-based consumer context in Malaysia.

5.2. Contributions of the study

This study provides several practical, theoretical, and policy-related contributions. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that marketers should prioritize content credibility, meaningful engagement, and interactive communication rather than relying excessively on promotional messaging. The positive effects of Facebook advertisements, number of likes, and friends' recommendations on purchase intention indicate that both informational and social influence

mechanisms remain important drivers of consumer behavior in the post-COVID-19 environment (Tao et al., 2022; Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). The study also contributes to the social media marketing literature by re-examining the effectiveness of Facebook features in a post-pandemic context. Consistent with prior research, Facebook advertisements, number of likes, and friends' recommendations were found to positively influence purchase intention. However, unlike previous studies, the sharing feature did not demonstrate a significant positive effect. This finding extends existing knowledge by suggesting that the influence of sharing behavior may have evolved in the post-COVID-19 era, potentially reflecting changes in user engagement patterns, content saturation, or digital consumption behavior. As such, the study provides an alternative perspective that warrants further investigation and comparative analysis across different contexts and populations. For policymakers and institutional stakeholders, the findings highlight the importance of digital literacy initiatives that encourage informed and responsible engagement with social media content. Enhancing users' ability to critically evaluate online information may contribute to more effective consumer decision-making and healthier digital ecosystems.

The study also aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by providing insights that support effective digital marketing strategies and sustainable business growth. The findings are relevant to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) through their emphasis on digital platforms and innovative marketing practices. Furthermore, the study supports SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by promoting informed purchasing decisions and responsible consumer behavior. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate the broader societal relevance of understanding social media influences on consumer decision-making in the post-pandemic digital economy.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

As with all empirical studies, several limitations should be acknowledged (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). First, although the sample size of 370 respondents was sufficient to represent the target population of UNIMAS students, the findings may not be generalizable to the broader Malaysian population. A larger and more diverse sample may yield different results and improve external validity.

Second, the study examined only four Facebook features such as, Facebook advertisements, number of likes, sharing, and friends' recommendations. Other platform features may also influence consumers' purchase intentions but were beyond the scope of this research. Furthermore, as social media platforms continuously evolve, the relevance and effectiveness of specific Facebook features may change over time.

5.4. Recommendations for Future Study

Future studies should expand the sample size and include respondents from more diverse demographic and geographical backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the findings. While the present study focused on undergraduate students at UNIMAS, broader population coverage

may provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' purchase intentions in different contexts. A sample size of approximately 400–500 respondents is recommended to improve statistical representation. Future research should also examine additional Facebook features, such as Facebook Stories, Marketplace, and Live functions, as social media platforms continuously evolve and introduce new forms of user interaction. Investigating these emerging features may provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies and consumer engagement in the digital environment.

Furthermore, comparative studies involving different age groups, particularly younger generations who are more actively exposed to evolving social media features, may help identify variations in consumer responses and purchasing behavior. Given the unexpected finding that the sharing feature did not significantly influence purchase intention, future research should further explore this relationship across different populations, platforms, and post-pandemic contexts to determine whether the observed effect is context-specific or reflects broader changes in digital consumer behavior.

Finally, future studies may extend this research by examining the role of social media marketing in supporting broader digital transformation initiatives, including Malaysia's Post COVID-19 Development Strategy (PCDS) 2030 and related digital economy objectives.

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