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Pioneering the Digital Marketplace: A Study on the Adoption of Social Commerce among Micro Enterprises in Malaysia

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Abstract: The study used a collaborative model that incorporates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to examine how social commerce (s-commerce) is implemented within micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (micro-SMEs). This study investigates the limited s-commerce adoption among micro-SMEs and then assesses how s-commerce affects their company's performance. To business owners in the Klang Valley, Penang, and Johor Bahru regions, 450 surveys were sent. To analyse the data, structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed. This study found that perceived usefulness, subjective norm, trust, and readiness all have a big impact on how s-commerce is adopted. Utilising user experience acted as a moderator in influencing attitudes towards adoption. This study contributed to the existing theory by incorporating the extended TAM with the TPB and additional elements. This integration enhanced our understanding of the factors influencing technology adoption, as well as the underlying motivations driving such behaviour. In the past, these models are often applied separately.

Keywords: social commerce; adoption; micro-SME; Malaysia

1. Introduction

A sizable number of small and micro-sized businesses in Malaysia have turned to using social media platforms as a way of advertising and distributing their goods or services as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak and the adoption of movement control orders (MCO) [1,2]. A group of online programs that are based on Web 2.0 concepts and technology can be referred to as social media, and examples include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. These platforms make it easier for people to create and distribute content [1]. The utilisation of this platform enhances interpersonal connections and allows individuals to participate in pleasurable activities through the exchange of open feedback and unrestricted sharing within



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a confined setting and a condensed duration [3]. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that social media functions not solely as a platform for recreational communication, but also as a vital marketing instrument in the business domain [4].

Research by [3] stated that the proliferation of social media platforms has generated considerable enthusiasm among businesses due to the vast number of users, offering new opportunities for engaging with many stakeholders, including consumers, suppliers, and employees. Originally intended to enable virtual interactions among virtual organizations in a business context, it has now evolved into a crucial communication tool that creates additional avenues for business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) interactions [5]. When used properly, social media enables businesses to enhance a variety of business operations. These could encompass interactions with business partners, information exchange, and supply chain communications and logistics management [3].

E-commerce, electronic marketing (e-marketing), and online shopping use behaviours support and improve social media applications by allowing users to acquire information about commodities in the simplest, quickest, and most recognisable way possible [4]. Having said that, JP Morgan in its 2020 E-commerce Payments Trends Report: Malaysia mentioned that social media is a part of everyday life in Malaysia, with 81% of the population using social media in 2020, a one-third rise from 2016. Facebook stands as the leading platform in terms of popularity, trailed by Instagram, Facebook Messenger, and LinkedIn. The statistics serve as an avenue for this research by looking at micro-SMEs owners who operate their business on Facebook.

The emergence of social commerce (s-commerce), a subset of e-commerce, was brought about by the development of social media and networking platforms [1]. This encompasses innovative online retail approaches and marketing tactics that leverage well-established social networking websites and peer-to-peer interaction to stimulate sales [3,4]. Now, it is one of the vital fields and one of the rapidly expanding domains within high-tech sector, particularly in trading and commercial settings.

There is widespread recognition that the application of social media can bring about benefits for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) [5]. In this particular context, the adoption of tools associated with social media has expedited and improved activities linked to e-commerce, e-marketing, and online shopping. These mechanisms empower users to easily and promptly retrieve information regarding available products using a method that is both familiar and efficient, thus contributing to the augmentation of retail earnings [6]. The increasing importance attributed to social media and e-commerce applications has led to novel consumer behavior, wherein businesses and patrons engage in more fruitful transactions by skillfully leveraging social networks [5].

Despite the advantages reported above, digital adoption by Malaysian businesses have been disappointing. Malaysian firms lagged behind Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, and Singapore in digitalization before the pandemic, according to World Bank data. It is believed that 77% of Malaysian SMEs are still digitally primitive [2]. It is understandable that the process of adopting information technology (IT) in an organisation a challenging endeavor that demands time for successful implementation. Concerns that the technology might become

a disruption to the business operations have also led to a low adoption of s-commerce [5]. Most micro-SMEs have a lack of understanding in e-commerce activities as there are limited competent personnel [1].

An analysis of the current literature has revealed a scarcity of empirical studies conducted on the implementation of s-commerce by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) [7]. The rise of e-commerce in Malaysia is fascinating yet daunting phenomenon that should not be overlooked. Although many Malaysians have begun to buy and sell via social media, there are still limited studies on s-commerce. Most of the previous studies focused on studying consumer's shopping behaviour in the domain of s-commerce [8]. This study took a similar approach but narrowing it down to micro-SMEs using s-commerce with social media platform as an enabler.

2. Literature review

Implementing information technology (IT) in an enterprise is a complex and time-consuming task that requires successful execution [3]. The adoption of IT is influenced by various organizational factors that can either facilitate or hinder the adoption process. Individuals, associations, and interconnected organizations all play a role in the adoption of IT. Several models are commonly employed to understand and facilitate the recognition and adoption of IT [9]. Notably, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are frequently used as the basis for technology adoption studies across different contexts [10]. Peter *et al.* [11] suggested, but did not empirically verify, a concept of information system (IS) performance built on a systematic review of past literature inclusive of six constructs namely system quality, information quality, usage, user satisfaction, individual influence, and organisational impact.

2.1. Social commerce

Social commerce (s-commerce), is an expansion of electronic commerce (e-commerce) that utilises the ample social capital and interaction data present in widely used social media platforms. The concept of social commerce (s-commerce), as outlined in academic literature by [1,3], encompasses a diverse range of activities involving the sale, acquisition, transfer, or exchange of products, services, and information utilizing social media platforms. This phenomenon is driven by the growing significance of social media and e-commerce tools, which has given rise to novel patterns in retail transactions. It is built upon the foundation of e-commerce.

S-commerce is divided into two broad categories, namely "social networking features integrated into conventional e-commerce websites" and "commercial features integrated into social media" [6]. Initially serving as a platform for virtual organizations to engage with one another, social media has now become a crucial component in communication, creating new avenues for B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) enterprises and contributing to the overall growth of the country's economy [12], leading to the emergence of s-commerce. In practical business scenarios, s-commerce has gained popularity among

new enterprises due to numerous advantages it offers to both sellers and buyers. These advantages include streamlined online shopping processes with fewer complications and the ability to position products or services more effectively towards the intended target market [13].

2.2. *Micro-Small-and-Medium Enterprises (micro-SMEs)*

[14] defines micro-SMEs (micro enterprises) in Malaysia as businesses establishments with sales turnover of less than RM300,000 or employees of less than five. Based on the statistics reviewed, 98.5% businesses established in Malaysia are SMEs with 76.5% of the SMEs are micro-SMEs. SME Contributes 38.9% (RM552.3 billion) of Malaysia's GDP in 2019. The services sector remains a consistent focal point of SME operations, constituting a substantial 63.3% contribution. Notably, the SMEs' services sector GDP expanded to 42.7%, predominantly influenced by sub-sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, food and beverages, as well as accommodation [15].

According to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (DOSM), the latest data from the Malaysia Statistical Business Register (MSBR) reveals that there was a total of 1,226,494 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in 2021. This number accounts for 97.4% of all establishments in Malaysia. In comparison to the 2016 figures, which recorded a total of 1,086,533 MSMEs, there has been an increase of approximately 140,000 firms. This indicates an average annual growth rate of 5.2% over the span of six years [14]. Nevertheless, the Malaysian economy saw a substantial impact as a result of the epidemic, notably affecting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). As of 2021, 37,000 MSMEs closed, with micro-enterprises accounting for the largest share [15].

2.3. *Review of relevant theories*

2.3.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM is a widely used framework for technology acceptance[3,9,16]. It consists of two key beliefs, perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU), which influence behavioral intention. TAM aims to predict user adoption and identify design issues before users interact with the technology. TAM is the most often used s-commerce adoption model [9]. It has been widely adopted, adapted, and expanded. As stated by [1,17], the idea of Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) refers to an individual's perception that using a specific technology will involve minimal effort. Perceived Usefulness (PU), on the other hand, relates to an individual's belief that using a given system would improve their job performance [17,18].

2.3.2. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

In 1985 the TPB (Theory of Planned Behavior) emerged as an expansion of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Its purpose was to anticipate an individual's inclination to perform a certain behavior at a specific time and place [19], alluding to how and when an action might be carried out. TRA was developed as an improvement on information integration theory. TPB is frequently used to predict the change of behaviour, particularly the behaviour linked

to technology use [18,20]. Subjective norm (SN) in TPB reflects one's perception of others' relevant opinions on one's decision to perform a behaviour [16]. In the context of s-commerce, gaining social support from others is one of the most important reasons for online social interaction [10]. A supportive SN is said to lead to the formation of a favourable attitude to the extent that people believe they can execute the behaviour in question [19].

2.3.3 Trust (T), Cost (C), Readiness (R)

In the process of s-commerce adoption, several variables affect their behavioural intention to adopt the system, including trust [1,21], cost [11], and readiness [22]. Trust (T) is one of the most key success indicators influencing the implementation of a modern information system [1,21]. Cost (C) relates to the degree to which companies assume that implementing technologies would be prohibitively expensive [11]. Individuals are more inclined to utilise s-commerce as they may profit from reduced prices, in addition to how they find s-commerce to be useful and simple to use. Readiness (R) is defined as managers' understanding and assessment of the extent to which they believe their companies possess the awareness, resources, dedication, and power to implement s-commerce. One with higher degree of readiness will be more inclined to use e-commerce [22].

3. Hypothesis development

3.1. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

[10] states that if a customer believes that using a technology or system is not difficult but can be done quickly, the user will not reject to utilise the technology or system since it is otherwise beneficial. This conviction is associated with the idea that it is necessary for an individual to do some effort in order to use a device or technology [18]. PEOU is frequently assumed to have an impact on micro-SMEs' acceptance and use of e-commerce. It has been demonstrated that if an advancement is simple to use, users are more likely to accept it [1]. This demonstrates that PEOU and current technologies have a positive connection. As a result, if Malaysian micro-SMEs believe that employing a technology like s-commerce is not synonymous with uncertainty, the micro-SMEs will use and execute s-commerce without hesitation [17]. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed.

H1: There is a positive relationship between Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A).

3.2. Perceived Usefulness (PU)

[16] define PU as an intangible metric indicating a user's belief that using a device can increase overall efficiency. If users believe that s-commerce can considerably boost entrepreneurial competitiveness, they will not hesitate to implement the technology [8]. E-commerce will increase the efficacy of small and medium-sized enterprises [17,20]. PU has significant ties to users' intentions to implement new technologies, such as s-commerce usage. [9] discovered that PU has a positive correlation with the overall deployment of new

technologies. PU variable is also believed to have a substantial effect on s-commerce acceptance [17]. Thus, the subsequent hypothesis is put forward:

H2: There is a positive relationship between Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A).

3.3. Subjective Norm (SN)

TPB is commonly utilised to forecast behavioral changes, particularly those related to the use of technology [19]. Subjective norm, a component of TPB, refers to an individual's perception of others' opinions concerning their decision to engage in a specific behavior [21]. Obtaining social support from others is important in online social interactions in the setting of s-commerce [1]. A supporting subjective norm is thought to impact the development of a favourable attitude, leading individuals to believe that they can carry out the behaviour in question efficiently [21]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: There is a positive relationship between Subjective Norm (SN) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A).

3.4. Trust (T), Cost (C), Readiness (R)

Trust (T) represents one of the critical success indicators that significantly influences the successful implementation of a modern information system [22]. Cost (C) is associated with how companies perceive the potential expenses involved in adopting new technologies, and it can be a determining factor in their decision-making process [21]. Readiness (R) refers to managers' evaluation of their company's awareness, resources, commitment, and capacity to implement s-commerce. Those with a higher level of readiness are more inclined to utilize e-commerce [22]. Based on the foregoing, this study assumes the following:

H4: There is a positive relationship between Trust (T) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A).

H5: There is a negative relationship between Cost (C) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A).

H6: There is a positive relationship between Readiness (R) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A).

3.5. User Experience (UE)

A study by [21] revealed that prior Internet experience moderates the relationship between website usability and booking intention in making reservation. Researchers also highlighted that user experience has evolved into an intriguing issue, with various frameworks, elements, and features of the notion explored. [23] discovered that prior transaction experience with a firm does not add to customer trust in the company's brand page on an e-commerce website, indicating that the trust transfer process may be influenced by customers' previous experiences. A study by [24] indicates that the impact of social norms on the intention to continue using social commerce is influenced by the user's level of experience. Specifically, the influence of social norms is more pronounced among users with less experience, as opposed to those with more experience. [23] Experienced users demonstrated a higher

propensity being affected by interaction and information affordances, whereas less experienced users exhibited greater susceptibility to navigation affordance. Therefore, user experience is included in this study and the following hypotheses is formulated:

H7: The positive relationship between Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.

H8: The positive relationship between Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.

H9: The positive relationship between Subjective Norm (SN) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.

H10: The positive relationship between Trust (T) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.

H11: The positive relationship between Cost (C) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.

H12: The positive relationship between Readiness (R) and Attitude towards s-commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.

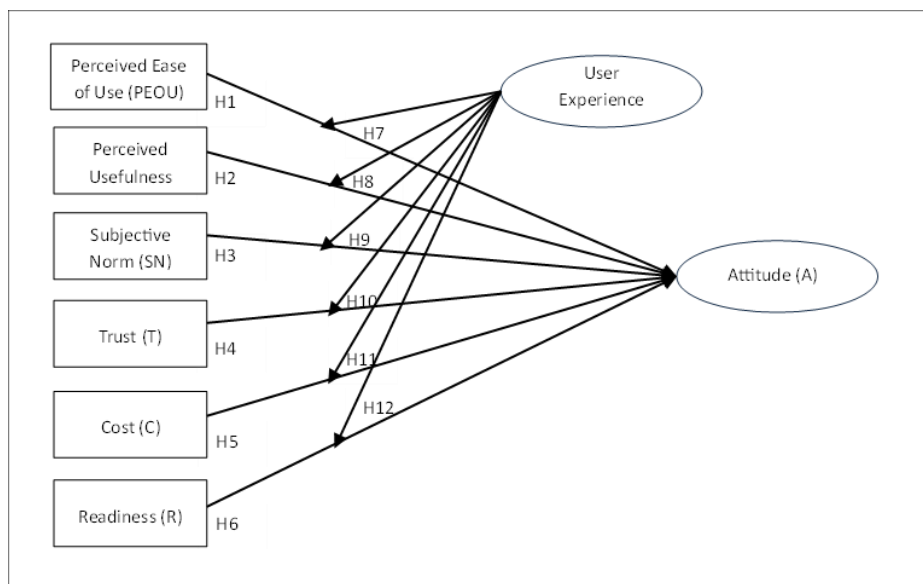


Figure 1. Proposed /conceptual framework.

Figure 1 presented the proposed framework integrates extended TAM and TPB with three extended elements Trust, (T) Cost (C) and Readiness (R) to better understand the behaviour and motivation behind technology adoption.

4. Research methodology

This study adopted quantitative method, purposive sampling technique using open-ended questionnaire survey distributed to 450 micro-SME owners located in Klang Valley, Penang and Johor due to the due to the population of the SMEs as well as these states represent the northern, central and southern region. A total of 353 completed questionnaires were returned. Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), using SmartPLS 3.0. was

used as the statistical software to assess the measurement models including reliability tests and the moderation models in this study.

5. Result and discussion

5.1. Reliability and validity analysis

This study adopts [25] proposal for determining convergent validity using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). In the context of factor loading assessment, convergent validity is measured under the individual items level where a construct must account for at least half (50%) of the variance of each corresponding item. Therefore, the factor loading of an item should be more than 0.708, as computed from the square of 0.708 which equals 50% variance of a particular item being accounted for. By referring to Table 1, all the items possess a range of loadings between 0.803 and 0.950 where all the items' loadings were above 0.708, therefore they are retained.

Table 1. Factor loading and reliability of constructs using PLS-SEM.

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE
Attitude (A)	A1	0.902	0.802
	A2	0.886	
	A3	0.885	
	A4	0.908	
Cost (C)	C1	0.914	0.732
	C2	0.808	
	C3	0.851	
	C4	0.870	
	C5	0.830	
User Experience (UE)	UE1	0.938	0.823
	UE2	0.907	
	UE3	0.876	
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	PEOU1	0.899	0.800
	PEOU2	0.854	
	PEOU3	0.950	
	PEOU4	0.892	
	PEOU5	0.874	
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1	0.836	0.773
	PU2	0.893	
	PU3	0.879	
	PU4	0.882	
	PU5	0.868	
	PU6	0.915	
Readiness (R)	R1	0.834	0.778
	R2	0.904	
	R3	0.907	
Subjective Norm (SN)	SN1	0.904	0.773
	SN2	0.811	
	SN3	0.932	
	SN4	0.866	
Trust (T)	T1	0.811	0.769
	T2	0.860	
	T3	0.904	
	T4	0.929	

The degree to which an item does not connect with other constructs from which it is intended to differ is known as discriminant validity. As recommended by [25], the cross loading criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio are examined in this study to evaluate discriminant validity. The cross-loading rule, according to [25], specifies that each item should load low on other constructs and high on its own constructions. According to Table 2, everything loads well on its own constructs but poorly on the others. Because the constructs are so obviously different from one another, this demonstrates that discriminant validity has been obtained.

Table 2. Cross-loading criterion.

	A	C	PEOU	PU	R	SN	T	UE
A1	0.902	0.723	0.647	0.670	0.742	0.652	0.717	0.677
A2	0.886	0.724	0.640	0.675	0.699	0.660	0.716	0.652
A3	0.885	0.697	0.684	0.663	0.718	0.693	0.691	0.602
A4	0.908	0.698	0.608	0.681	0.753	0.676	0.679	0.629
C1	0.725	0.914	0.572	0.597	0.681	0.573	0.689	0.624
C2	0.641	0.808	0.482	0.514	0.645	0.557	0.667	0.589
C3	0.676	0.851	0.550	0.598	0.581	0.576	0.710	0.571
C4	0.690	0.870	0.530	0.564	0.598	0.588	0.705	0.598
C5	0.659	0.830	0.509	0.511	0.555	0.569	0.686	0.524
UE1	0.670	0.651	0.631	0.594	0.650	0.622	0.683	0.938
UE2	0.648	0.581	0.595	0.592	0.592	0.616	0.628	0.907
UE3	0.626	0.618	0.623	0.578	0.624	0.583	0.650	0.876
PEOU1	0.647	0.536	0.899	0.745	0.527	0.517	0.526	0.595
PEOU2	0.615	0.564	0.854	0.723	0.546	0.508	0.540	0.610
PEOU3	0.684	0.568	0.950	0.747	0.595	0.545	0.576	0.644
PEOU4	0.642	0.550	0.892	0.737	0.559	0.521	0.503	0.586
PEOU5	0.629	0.550	0.874	0.725	0.565	0.500	0.541	0.602
PU1	0.628	0.556	0.725	0.836	0.548	0.496	0.489	0.550
PU2	0.671	0.597	0.742	0.893	0.553	0.508	0.527	0.594
PU3	0.660	0.620	0.738	0.879	0.560	0.516	0.541	0.564
PU4	0.662	0.542	0.687	0.882	0.566	0.499	0.503	0.587
PU5	0.652	0.558	0.737	0.868	0.544	0.482	0.545	0.551
PU6	0.687	0.567	0.712	0.915	0.609	0.494	0.518	0.572
R1	0.678	0.639	0.522	0.498	0.834	0.540	0.587	0.604
R2	0.735	0.632	0.549	0.588	0.904	0.560	0.610	0.612
R3	0.738	0.626	0.581	0.606	0.907	0.550	0.567	0.600
SN1	0.676	0.600	0.534	0.538	0.595	0.904	0.686	0.599
SN2	0.607	0.562	0.445	0.446	0.506	0.811	0.650	0.543
SN3	0.697	0.605	0.556	0.541	0.553	0.932	0.683	0.622
SN4	0.648	0.586	0.497	0.466	0.536	0.866	0.670	0.589
T1	0.635	0.665	0.501	0.511	0.545	0.613	0.811	0.604
T2	0.673	0.675	0.504	0.485	0.571	0.669	0.860	0.625
T3	0.707	0.741	0.545	0.527	0.597	0.692	0.904	0.633
T4	0.727	0.749	0.556	0.547	0.621	0.704	0.929	0.666

5.2. Hypothesis findings

The summary of the results of hypotheses assessment in this research is displayed in Table 3. The hypothesised relationships were evaluated by doing route analysis, specifically examining the direct effects, using the bootstrapping technique. Additionally, the interaction effect was investigated by employing the interaction term technique.

Table 3. Summary of hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses	Description	Results
H1	There is a positive relationship between Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A).	Not Supported
H2	There is a positive relationship between Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A).	Supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between Subjective Norm (SN) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A).	Supported
H4	There is a positive relationship between Trust (T) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A).	Supported
H5	There is a negative relationship between Cost (C) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A).	Not Supported
H6	There is a positive relationship between Readiness (R) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A).	Supported
H7	The positive relationship between Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.	Not Supported
H8	The positive relationship between Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.	Supported
H9	The positive relationship between Subjective Norm (SN) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.	Not Supported
H10	The positive relationship between Trust (T) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.	Not Supported
H11	The positive relationship between Cost (C) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.	Not Supported
H12	The positive relationship between Readiness (R) and Attitude towards Social Commerce (A) will be stronger when User Experience (UE) is higher.	Not Supported

Hypotheses 1 to 6 were poised to examine the factors that influence the attitude towards s-commerce. Perceived usefulness (PU), subjective norm (SN), trust (T), cost (C), and readiness (R) are the six factors that this study found to have the most impact on the adoption of s-commerce. On the other hand, analysis of perceived ease of use (PEOU) unexpectedly showed that the hypothesis is not supported.

The results suggest that sellers are inclined to embrace social commerce (s-commerce) when it offers advantages to their respective organisations. According to a study for Malaysian small and microbusinesses, perceived usefulness is a key factor in the adoption of system, specifically s-commerce [26]. Additionally, the result supports earlier studies that stress the significance of perceived usefulness (PU) in the adoption of new technology.

In s-commerce, a supportive subjective norm (SN) leads to a favorable attitude if individuals believe they can perform the behavior [19]. Gaining social support is a crucial motivator for online social interaction. Findings by [21] revealed that various factors, such as perceived benefits and commitment, exert a significant influence on the attitudes of small vendors towards social commerce. [21] found that shared information, such as ratings, reviews, recommendations, and referrals, drives users to use social media and e-commerce.

The findings indicate that micro and small businesses' adoption of e-commerce is highly influenced by their close relationships.

Organizational readiness is the most important element impacting SMEs' adoption of e-commerce, according to research by [22]. [6] went on to emphasize the significance of IT readiness for the implementation of social commerce in Malaysian small and medium businesses. Taking Facebook fan page as an example in this study, the micro-SMEs owners can offer various services to the existing customers such as products enquiry, customer feedback and product updates. The results implied that the s-commerce adoption is easier if the micro-SMEs get started with offering services instead of selling at the initial stage.

Trust is especially important when it comes to financial transactions and most respondents claimed that s-commerce is an effective method to perform online transaction. [1] stated that enhanced trustworthiness and security of the social media platform led to higher social commerce effectiveness. The findings on cost showed there is a positive and significant relationship between cost (C) and attitude (A). With the aid of benefit-cost framework, the positive relationship between cost and attitude in this study could be explained such that to adopt s-commerce, SMEs' decision was mainly focused on the benefits of adopting s-commerce and by that SMEs have made a trade-off with the cost.

The notion that using a system or piece of technology needs work is known as perceived ease of use (PEOU) [18]. PEOU is linked to effort expectancy, where lower effort leads to increased intention to use new technology. In s-commerce, ease of use determines sellers' efforts. [10] found that PEOU, along with other factors, boosts s-commerce intent among respondents, including micro-SMEs. However, this study suggests that PEOU's impact may not be significant from sellers' perspective, as ROI outweighs user-friendliness. [24] also found no effect of PEOU on Malaysian small and microbusinesses' use of social media, presumably as a result of their prior technological exposure. Online sellers should possess thorough readiness and receive training in effectively utilising social media platforms.

5.3. Influence of user experience on attitudes towards social commerce

The study is primarily examining the effect of user experience as a moderator to influence the attitude towards the adoption of s-commerce. The purpose for this objective was to evaluate the effects of user experience on the attitude towards s-commerce. This study investigated if prior e-commerce experience influences merchants' attitudes on the adoption of s-commerce in this setting.

The findings show that when user experience (UE) is high, there is a larger positive association between perceived usefulness (PU) and attitude toward s-commerce (A). On the other hand, perceived usability (PEOU), subjective norm (SN), trust (T), cost (C), and readiness (R) indicated otherwise. There were some past studies attempted to examine user experience as a moderator in technology adoption instead of the direct predictor. The findings from such research yield inconsistent results, with majority supporting the notion that user experience significantly moderates the relationship.

This study showed that, with the exception of perceived usefulness (PU), user experience does not mediate correlations between predictors and attitude toward s-commerce. This result contrasts with past findings, which primarily focused on consumers rather than sellers. Research indicates that sellers' motivation to adopt new technologies is different, often driven by trends, consumer usage, and revenue generation [21]. Sellers tend to adopt new technology even if it falls short of their expectations or standards [11]. User experience, in this context, positively influences perceived usefulness (PU), as those with positive experiences are more likely to adopt s-commerce when it benefits their business [20]. Therefore, prior experience with e-commerce does not significantly impact sellers' intention to adopt s-commerce, as their motivation is primarily focused on monetary gains.

6. Conclusion

The result of this study revealed a strong and significant interdependence of variables namely perceived usefulness (PU), subjective norm (SN), trust (T), cost (C) and readiness (R) in s-commerce adoption among micro-SMEs established after all the results applied to the relationships among the variables explored in this study were indeed significant and supported. In this sense, there are several practical implications from both theoretical and managerial perspectives that are worthy of being highlighted to address the importance of the studied variables in this study.

The study contributes to existing theory by creating a research framework that combines and incorporates essential elements from established technology acceptance theories. By integrating the extended TAM with TPB and IS success model, along with three extended factors: trust, cost, and readiness, the study provides a deeper understanding of the motivations and behaviors driving technology adoption, which were traditionally examined separately in the past.

User experience is proven to have significant relationship towards the adoption of new technology. In this context however, the impacts of prior e-commerce experience in embracing new technology are less studied. This research took into consideration sellers' e-commerce experience and used it as a moderator to examine whether the variable moderates the relationship in their intention to adopt s-commerce. The finding suggests that contrary to the research on consumers, prior exposure to e-commerce do not strengthen their intention to adopt s-commerce. The user experience is not the central element which could cause the direct attitude change. The user experience is important to the consumers but not the sellers. At the end of the study, user experience has proven to have no relationship with user attitude towards s-commerce.

This research holds significance for policymakers as it provides valuable insights for formulating policies and strategies that benefit both SMEs and platform providers. The findings suggest that agencies like Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), and SME Corp. can collaborate to promote the adoption of new technology among micro-SMEs, considering their limited financial resources, human

capital, and technology infrastructure. By working together, the national agenda for the digital economy can be accelerated, benefiting all stakeholders.

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Conflicts of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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