

The role of social media marketing and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones

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Abstract

The technological development in general and the growing popularity of social media in particular has opened a new opportunity for companies to better engage consumers through online communities, social networking sites and blogs. Despite the growing market potential of the social media, many companies are still reluctant to incorporate it into their marketing campaign on the premise that social media advertising is a very personalized way of advertisement and promotions which target only a certain small groups which are interested in a particular domain, quite unlike conventional advertising strategy. Thus, the study examined the role of social media marketing and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones. A sample of 200 college students were surveyed and the data analyzed using SPSS. On analyzing the study, it was found that companies use social media to engage their target consumers online. This indicates that social media do not only help smartphone marketers to effectively interact with their target audience given its ability to encourage back-and-forth interaction between the consumers and the company unlike the one-way traditional media but it also encourages the readers to buy the advertised products. On the findings from the hypotheses, it was found that all the hypotheses were supported and this indicates that social media marketing significantly influences consumers' decision to buy smartphones. However, this is mediated by the type of advertisement and product involvement. These findings would help marketers and firms to make hard economic decisions.

Keywords: *Social media marketing, product involvement, consumers' purchase intentions*

1. Introduction

The technological development in general and the growing popularity of social media in particular has opened a new opportunity for companies to better engage consumers through online communities, social networking sites and blogs. Many companies today have come to realize that there is the need to keep up with the fast pace of the changing business environment or risk being outdated. It is no longer feasible for a pure-bricks business model and marketing strategy to thrive well in the current market scenario without considering social media (Bashar, *et al.* 2012). Thus, social media has become really a vital gradient in today's marketing mix in general and in promotional mix in particular. Although many social media sites were initially designed for socializing purposes (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), the growing traffic among many online communities, social network sites and blogs have driven many companies to establish their presence in one social media site or the other in order to not only create brand awareness especially among young consumers but also to cultivate favourable brand impression which may ultimately stimulate trial purchase. This indicates that adapting some form of marketing online through social media is a critical edge for major businesses to thrive in their marketing efforts. However, while much studies on social networking has been documented over the years, a review of the literature indicates that there are relatively few studies which specifically considers the marketing potential of these online communities. Driven by this, the current study intends to investigate the role of social media marketing and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones.

Two main problem areas motivated the conducting of this study. First, there is little prior research that has specifically investigated the impact of social media marketing and product involvement on consumer's intentions to buy smartphones. This is because many of the prior studies conducted on social media tend to focus on the communication potential and marketing potential. However, research into this issue has produced mainly general overviews on social media marketing with a theoretical perspective. Missing are actual research studies of social media marketing in specific organizations. Instead, research needs to document different voices in the social media marketing and product involvement, especially those that have been marginalized. For example, Kim, *et al.* (2013) studied the impact of social network sites ad type and product involvement on consumers' purchase

intentions of some selected products. Also, Bashar, *et al.* (2012) studied the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool without focusing on any specific product. This indicates that despite the growing body of studies investigating the impact of social media advertising on consumer's purchase intentions of products, there are limited studies which specifically focus on how social media marketing advertising type and product involvement can influence consumers to buy smartphones. Besides, many of the few studies were conducted in the western countries and given the sociocultural differences between the west and east, this current study is designed to examine the impact of social media marketing advertising type and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions. Secondly, despite the growing market potential of the social media, many companies are still reluctant to incorporate it into their marketing campaign on the premise that social media advertising is a very personalized way of advertisement and promotions which target only a certain small groups which are interested in a particular domain, quite unlike conventional advertising strategy. For example, the study of Neti, (2011) found that only 23% of marketers seem to be using social media to engage customers and promote their products and services. The study is conducted to help such companies to better understand the benefits of adopting social media in their marketing campaign so as to enhance not only brand awareness but also to enhance their sales performance. Therefore, this research intends to identify the impact of social media marketing on consumer's intention to buy smartphones, investigate the role of ad type on the effectiveness of social media marketing and determine the role of product involvement on consumer's purchase intentions. The findings of this study will help companies who are still reluctant to adopt social media marketing to better understand the benefits of adopting social media in their marketing campaign so as to enhance not only brand awareness but also to enhance their sales performance.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of purchase intention

Purchase intention can be defined as the probability of a consumer buying a product after an evaluation of competing brands (Tirtiroglu and Elbeck, 2008). However, another study considers purchase intention to be the extent of a future behavioral orientation shown by a customer in buying products or services shown in advertisements (Baheti, *et al.* 2012). While the former claim indicates that purchase intention is the chances of a person choosing a brand as a result of his or her need recognition and alternative product evaluation, the latter definition indicates that purchase intention is the degree of a consumer buying a product he or she sees in an advertisement. However, both claims indicate that purchase intention is the likelihood of a consumer patronizing a marketer.

2.1.1. The importance of consumers' purchase intentions to smartphones companies

Consumers' purchases are vital for the survival and success of smartphone companies and this is determined by their purchase intentions. This shows that consumers are the essence of the existence of the business because they help to buy the products or services that the companies produce. It indicates that consumers' purchases determine the market potential for the companies, without which, no market will exist (Tirtiroglu and Elbeck, 2008). According to this view, the sales revenue and bottom line performance of the smartphone companies relies on consumers' purchases. This indicates that the higher the purchase intentions of consumers, the more chances of survival and success the company will achieve and vice versa. Besides, smartphone companies use consumers' purchase behaviour data to measure their supply and demand business operations. For example, the data obtained from consumers' purchase patterns can help the companies produce the products at the most favorable consumer price points. In supporting this claim, the study of Barber, *et al.* (2012) found that data collected from consumer's purchase intention can help the business identify which products have the most economic value. Also, the information on consumer's spending behaviour can help to identify consumer's unmet needs, thereby opening new market opportunities for them to enhance their competitiveness. This indicates that consumer purchase intention can generate information for marketers to streamline their business strategies, thereby enhancing their bottom line performance.

However, consumer's purchase intentions can only be enhanced through certain factors. According to this latter claim, smartphone companies can only encourage higher purchase intentions when they provide superior customer value at competitive prices. In supporting this claim, Belch and Belch, (2009); Kotler and Armstrong,

(2010) opine that in a highly competitive business environment, the company can only motivate consumers to patronize them when the product and service quality meets or surpasses the consumers' expectations. This indicates that competitive advantage can only be achieved when they have better knowledge about the needs and preferences of consumers and satisfy them better than their competitors. Similarly, a study conducted by Sunday and Bayode, (2011) opine that companies can boost consumers' purchases intentions by offering superior products and services at a competitive price. This indicates that consumer's purchases intentions can only be motivated by understanding and satisfying consumers' needs and expectations better than competing rivals since consumers today are more informed and they have a wide variety of product range to choose when making purchase decisions.

2.1.2. Measuring purchase intention

Since purchase intention forecasts consumers' actual purchase and the future decisions of the consumers, it is very imperative for the companies to constantly measure consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones. This is very relevant because it will help the marketing department of the company to enhance the company's sales revenue and market position. Driven by this, quite a number of scholars have proposed different indicators and dimensions in measuring purchase intentions after studying the concept of purchase intentions over the years. Among the various studies, for example, Laroche, *et al.* (1996) proposes two variables in measuring purchase intentions: a consumer's consideration in purchasing a brand and expectation to buy a brand. According to this proposition, the likelihood to purchase smartphones by consumers can be determined by personal and product characteristics. This indicates that smartphone companies can project consumers' likelihood to purchase their products by looking at their needs identification and product features, benefits and functionality. However, Hosein, (2002) propose four variables to measure purchase intentions which include consumer's interest, attending, information and evaluation. According to this latter view, the likelihood of a consumer to buy a product depends on his or her personal feelings and preference for the product or brand and this will influence the consumer to seek for information about the product while evaluating the various options. However, both claims seem to suggest that a consumer's intent to buy a specific product brand is an aspect of both affective and cognitive behavior and it can be determined through attitude and likeability measurement.

2.2. Social media marketing as antecedent of consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones

The focus of this section is placed on the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention of consumers of smartphones. The following issues will be discussed here: definition of social media marketing, the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions.

2.2.1. Definition of social media marketing

Social media marketing is construed as marketing effort aimed to gain traffic or attention through online communities, social networks and blogs (Neti, 2011; Bashar, *et al.* 2012). However, another view defined social media marketing as using social network services to persuade consumers that a marketer's products or services are worthwhile (Kim, *et al.* 2013). While the former definition considers social media marketing as marketing programs which centres on an effort to generate contents which will not only attract attention but also encourage readers to share such product information with their friends and families, the latter definition indicates that social media marketing is using social networking sites to communicate with a target audience about one's company products, thus creating a positive impression about the marketer's brand and making them respond toward the advertisement in a favourable way. Although expressed differently, both claims show that social media marketing is the process of using social media applications to inform, persuade and remind consumers about the existence of certain products and services so as to achieve some social and economic ends.

2.2.2. The relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones

There are two views on the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions. On one hand, studies portray the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions on a positive light. According to these studies, social media do not only help marketers to effectively interact with their target audience given its ability to encourage back-and-forth interaction between the consumers and the company unlike the one-way traditional media but it also encourages the readers to buy the

advertised products. This is because social media offers marketing applications where readers tend to share product information with their friends and families and such information is considered to be more credible since it involves a friend who may not have financial motives (Leng, *et al.* 2011). For example, international companies such as Starbucks and IBM use social media as a potential marketing platform to promote their advertisements campaign, thereby enhancing their ability to engage the young consumers and enhance sales. In supporting these claims, the study of Thackeray, *et al.* (2012); Leung, *et al.* (2013) assert that social media helps to spread a corporate message from user to user and presumably resonates because it appears to come from a trusted source, as opposed to the brand or company itself. Similarly, a survey conducted by Dimensional Research found that 90% of the respondents affirm that reading social media advertising reviews positively influence their purchase decisions (Gesenhues, 2013). This indicates that social media advertising enhances the marketers' ability to effectively communicate their product features and benefits at costs effective way so as to consumers to buy their products or services.

However, a conflicting view casts the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions on a more negative light. According to this pessimistic perspective, social media is not a strong determinant of consumer's purchase intentions. For example, while some studies assert that consumer's inability to touch or feel products and technical problems about the website may reduce purchase intentions, another argue that social media only focuses on a narrow target group. In supporting these claims, the study of Choi and Lee, (2003); Quinton and Fennemore, (2013) opine that social media advertisement effectiveness is reduced by consumers' inability to examine products or services details effectively, websites' technical problems and privacy or security considerations. Similarly, Cha, (2009); Bruhn, *et al.* (2012) assert that social media advertising is a very personalized way of advertisement and promotions which target only a certain small groups which are interested in a particular domain, quite unlike conventional advertising strategy. Given this, the study of Neti, (2011) found that only 23% of marketers seem to be using social media to engage customers and promote their products and services. This indicates that social media advertising has its own limitation just like every other advertising medium.

2.3. Potential mediators of the social media marketing and consumers purchase intentions relationship

2.3.1. Ad type as a mediator

Social media types of ads are classified into three basic types which include advertising through homepage, fan page and events advertising (Kim, *et al.* 2013). This indicates that marketers can engage in social media advertising by creating a company's homepage, fan page or through certain events that may be of interest to the consumers. Although research on social media marketing ad type is scant, there is evidence to believe that the effectiveness of social media marketing in persuading people to purchase products will depend on the type of advertising in question. According to this claim, advertising through fan page may be more effective in persuading users to purchase the advertised product than advertisement through the company's homepage (Kim, *et al.* 2007). This is because fan page may encourage users to share the advertised products with their friends and families and people tend to place more trust on products recommended by their friends since they are believed not to have any financial motives. However, products advertised through the company's homepage may be perceived otherwise because they may be considered as a medium to convince them to buy products they may not even need. In supporting this claim, the study of Harris and Dennis, (2011); Wang, *et al.* (2012) found that many social media users respond positively to advertisement associated with product comments or recommendations from friends. For example, Emerson, (2013) reports that Facebook has 1,000 stores and Polkadot Alley, a US-based clothes company, is on pace to produce \$1.5 million in revenue — 95% of it coming from people who purchase goods through the comments or recommendations section of the fan page. It can be concluded here that the ad type mediates the relationship between social media advertising and consumer's purchase intentions.

2.3.2. Product involvement as a mediator

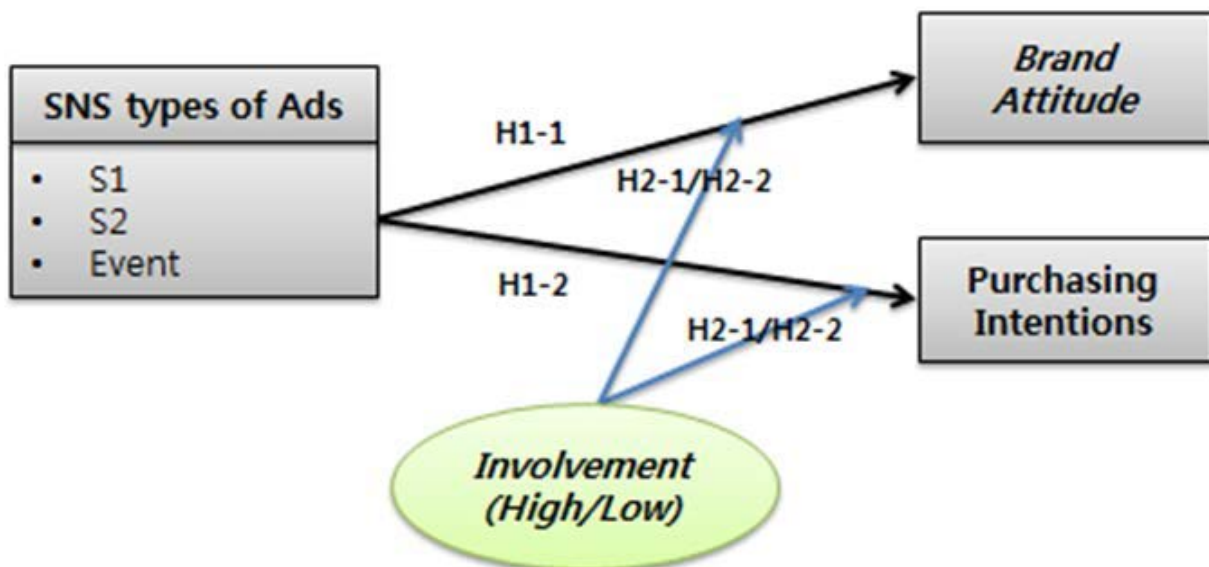
Product involvement is construed as a personal importance and interest placed on a product which is caused by the stimulation of certain circumstances (Kim, *et al.* 2013). This indicates that product involvement entails a consumer's personal feelings and preference for the product or brand and this will influence him or her to seek

for information about the product although there are limited studies to support this claim (Jothi, *et al.* 2011). This indicates that product involvement is an individual difference variable which may mediate the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions because consumer's personal feelings and preference for the product will determine consumers' decision making and communication behaviors although there are limited studies on this line of inquiry. However, another view seems to offer a conflicting perspective. According to this latter claim, there is no significant relationship between product involvement, social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions. In supporting this claim, the study of Huang, (2012) opine that consumer's purchase intention of virtual goods is primarily influenced by the user's online experiences and the ease of navigating around the website.

2.4. Theoretical framework

Kim, *et al.* (2013) studied the impact of social network sites ad type and product involvement on consumer's purchase intention and Figure 2.1 below shows the research model of the study. The main objective of the study was to investigate the role of SNS on the type of advertising depending on the involvement of the product to the sense of usefulness or ease of consumers' purchase intention. The study used an experimental research design with questionnaire measuring a total of 180 respondents who have experience on the use of SNS. On analysing the differences on the impact of product involvement and advertising types, the study found that the purchase of low involvement products was higher than the high involvement products from all forms of advertising. However, the findings on consumers' purchase intention on all types of advertisement shows that there is a statistically significant difference between product involvements. This indicates that advertisements for low involvement products are more relevant than the high involvement product based on the SNS advertising types.

Figure 2.1 The research model



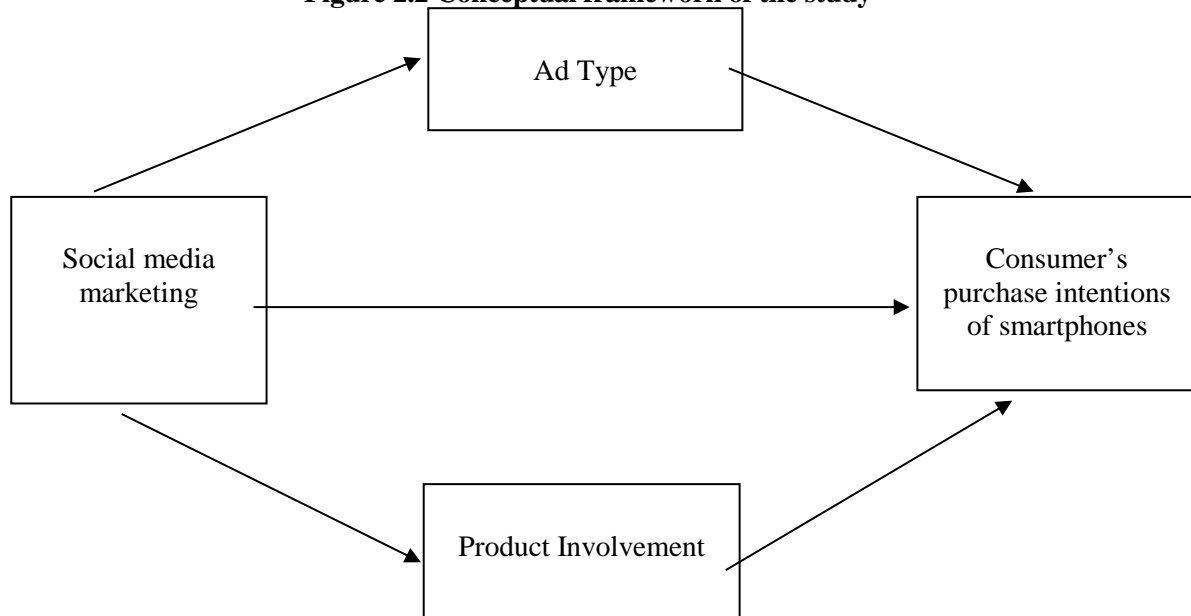
Adapted from the study of Kim, *et al.* (2013)

However, while the study offers some insights on how SNS advertising type can enhance consumer's purchase intention, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the sample size to the larger population given the small sample size. This claim is based on the assertion of Fosgate, (2009); Bryman and Bell, (2011) that the probability of a study to yield a statistically sound conclusion is based on large enough sample because large sample size reduces the chances of missing important units during study, thereby ensuring adequate representativeness of the population. Besides, the study was conducted in South Korea and given the sociocultural and technological differences between Malaysia and South Korea, this study is conducted to determine if similar findings will be obtained in the current location.

2.5. Conceptual framework

The focus here is placed on the conceptual framework of the study. Figure 2.2 below shows the framework of the study and it was adapted from the study of Kim, *et al.* (2013) on the impact of social network sites ad type and product involvement on consumer's purchase intention. The framework shows the interrelationship between the variables which explains that SNS advertising may influence consumer's purchase intentions. However, the framework explains that ad type and product involvement mediate the relationship between SNS advertising and consumer's purchase intentions.

Figure 2.2 Conceptual framework of the study



2.6. Conclusion

Although many social networking sites were created for socializing purposes in that users sign up to connect and share information with their friends and families, the growing popularity and traffic of many social media sites has opened new doors for marketers to promote their products. Given this, there has been a growing body of studies investigating the impact of social network sites advertising on consumer's purchase intentions. However, a review of leading academic journals database indicates that there are limited studies on the impact of social media marketing advertising type and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions. Besides, many of the few studies were conducted in the west and given the sociocultural differences between the west and east, this current study is designed to examine the impact of social media marketing advertising type and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions.

3. Research methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. Thus, the following issues will be discussed here: the research approach, geographical location, population and sample size analysis, sampling technique, data collection instrument, measurement of the variables, statistical tools used for data analysis and pretesting and research assumptions.

3.1. The research approach

This study uses a quantitative approach to conduct the study. A quantitative study is a number based study which tends to produce a quantifiable data. A quantitative approach was used because of the numerous advantages it has over qualitative approach. For example, a quantitative approach helps to effectively measure cause and effect of the variables and the study has higher chances of generating results that can be generalized to

the larger population. In supporting this claim, Bryman and Bell, (2011) indicate that a quantitative study tends to be more objective since it relates with quantifiable data and the findings can be generalized beyond the sample size. However, unlike qualitative study, a quantitative approach lacks the in-depth and rich of data associated with qualitative studies. This is because the quantitative approach is a number based study which produces only quantifiable data.

3.2. Population and sample size analysis

The target population of this study is undergraduate students living in Seremban, Malaysia. The decision to target this population is based on the fact that both the use of social media and the purchase of smartphones seem to be more popular among young adults such as undergraduate students who use such new technology for gratification-seeking purposes. However, since it is not feasible to study the whole target population, a sample of about 200 respondents will be selected to represent the population. The decision to selected this sample size is based on the recommendation of Collis and Hussey, (2009) propose that a manageable sample size should be selected to represent the population since it is difficult to include everybody in the study. The authors further indicate that selecting a manageable sample size can enhance the convenience of collecting and analysing the data while reducing the time and budget spent in conducting the study. However, selecting a small sample size out of a large population can compromise the results of the study because it may not ensure adequate representation of the population. Given this, Fosgate, (200) argues that the probability of a study to yield a statistically sound conclusion is based on large enough sample because large sample size reduces the chances of missing important units during study, thereby ensuring adequate representativeness of the population.

3.3. Sampling technique

The study uses a simple random sampling technique in that the respondents were selected randomly. A simple random sampling is a sampling technique in that everybody in the population has an equal and independent chance of being included and selected for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used in this study because it ensures adequate representation of the population since every unit has an equal opportunity of being included in the study. In supporting this claim, Sekaran and Bougie, (2010) indicate that simple random sampling technique enhances the representativeness of the population since there is an equal and independent probability of including every sections of the population. However, simple random sampling technique is not as simple as it sounds because the profile of the respondents must be known prior to conducting the study in order to randomly select them during data collection as indicated by Bluman, (2001).

3.4. Data collection instrument

This study uses questionnaire to collect the data. Questionnaire was used because of the numerous advantages it has over other methods such as focus group discussion and interview or observation. For example, questionnaire is more convenient for the respondents because it helps them to answer the questions in their own convenient time. Besides, questionnaire can be used to collect large amount of data within a short period of time. Also, unlike observations and focus group discussions, questionnaire helps to collect a more objective and accurate data because standardized questions are presented to the target subjects. In supporting this claim, the study of Lefever, *et al.* (2007) opine that questionnaires is a convenient technique of collecting large quantifiable data whose results maybe be generalized to the larger population. However, questionnaire does not make room for asking probing question unlike interview and focus group discussions where complex and probing questions can be asked so as to obtain detail information about the subject matter.

3.5. Measurement of the variables

A total of 25 questions are used to measure the consumer's responses toward the issues and a multidimensional scale of a Five point Likert scales is adapted to measure the social media marketing, ad type, product involvement and consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones. However, ordinal and normal dimensions are used to measure the respondents' demographic profile.

3.6. Statistical tools used for data analysis

Being a quantitative study, some statistical tools are used to compute and analyze the data. For example, SPSS is used to compute and analyze the data collected from the subjects. Also, Pearson correlation and Multi Regression are used to test the hypotheses so as to determine the ones that are supported or rejected. Similarly, SPSS is used to determine the reliability of the research instrument.

3.7. Pretesting

Pretesting entails studying a few selected people to determine how well the wordings of the questions will be understood by the target respondents. Prior to conducting the main study, a sample of 20 subjects will be selected and the questionnaire will be distributed among them. This is done to know how easy the question will be for them to easily answer them. At the end of the exercise, the subjects will be asked if the questions are easy to understand. The responses obtained will determine whether to modify the questions or not. Subsequently, the data will be computed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the reliability of the research instrument will be tested to determine the reliability rate.

3.8. Research assumptions

It is assumed in this study that the respondents will be willing to provide accurate and objective responses to the questions. Also, it is assumed that the study will yield statistically sound results whose findings can be generalized beyond the sample size to the larger population.

4.0. Data analysis and discussion

The focus of this chapter is to analyze and discuss the results of the study. The following issues are discussed here: demographic profile of the respondents, social media marketing, ad types, product involvement and purchase intentions of smartphones as well as discussions of the hypotheses.

4.1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 4.1 below shows the results from the respondents' demographic profile. The data was dominated by more male Malaysian undergraduate students while Indians are the least represented in the data. This is because there are more Malays in the target study location with few other nationalities. However, the reason why the data is dominated by more male respondents is because there are more males than females according to the Malaysian population statistics. In supporting this claim, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (2009) reports that Malaysia gender ratio is placed at 103 males to 100 females.

Also, the data is dominated by younger students within the age bracket of 18-22 years old. The reason why there are more young students is because many of them left high schools at earlier age and proceed immediately to the university without wasting time. On the monthly income, the result shows that majority of the respondents earn between RM1,000 -RM2,000. The low-income range is because majority of the respondents are full time students who do not work but rely on either parents or sponsors to provide their living expenses.

Table 4.1: Respondents' demographic data

Respondents' demographic variables		Number	Percentage (%)
Nationality	Malays	44	29.3
	Indians	27	18
	Chinese	42	28
	Others	37	24.7
	Total	150	100
Gender	Male	76	50.7
	Female	74	49.3
	Total	150	100
Age range	18-22 years old	56	37.3
	23-27 years old	69	46
	28-32 years old	23	15.3
	Above 32 years old	2	1.3
	Total	150	100

Monthly income	Less than RM1,000	42	28
	RM1,000-RM2,000	61	40.7
	RM2,001-RM3,000	29	19.3
	RM3,001-RM4,000	14	9.3
	Above RM4,000	4	2.7
Total		150	100

4.2. Social media marketing

Table 4.1 below provides the results of how social media marketing centres on efforts to create content that attract attentions on the advertised product. The results show that majority of the respondents agree to the claim of social media marketing helping to create attention about the advertised product. This is because there is a growing interest and traffic on social media and this indicates that social media is a potential marketing tool where smartphone companies can effectively create media contents that will generate much traffic to the brand. This finding is supported by prior studies on social media marketing among such includes the study of Kim, *et al.* (2013) who opine that the growing popularity and traffic of many social media sites has opened new doors for marketers to promote their products and attract attention to their brands.

Table 4.1: Social media marketing create content that attract attentions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	42	28.0	28.0	28.0
Agree	96	64.0	64.0	92.0
Neutral	10	6.7	6.7	98.7
Disagree	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

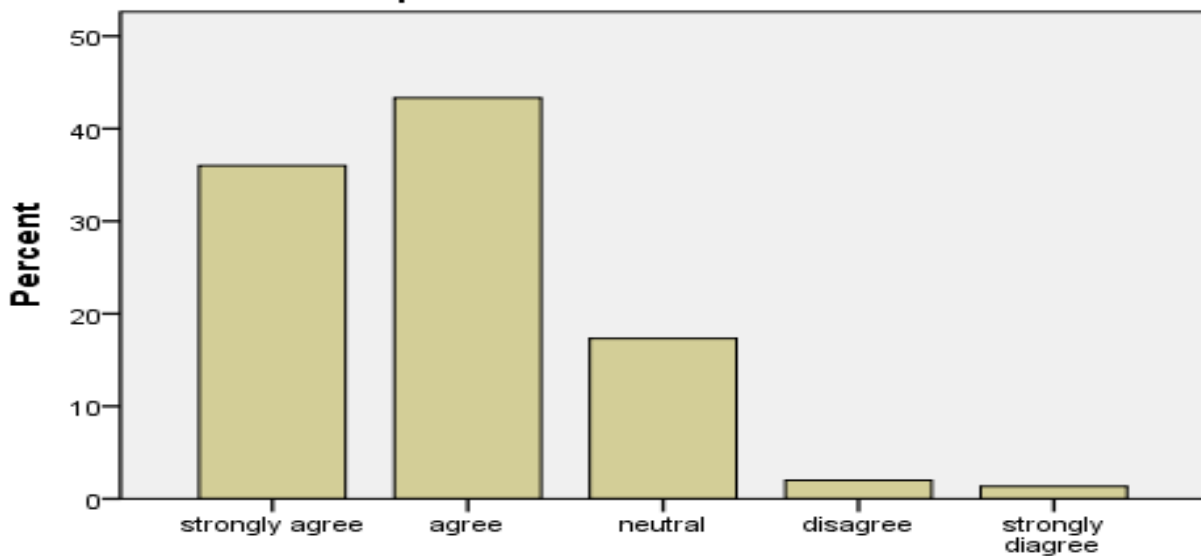
Table 4.2 below provides the result of the role of social media marketing. The results show that majority of the respondents agree that social media marketing encourages readers to share advertised products with their friends on social networking sites which results to the spread of word of mouth marketing and consequently consumers tend to trust advertising messages shared by friends because they tend not to have financial motives unlike advertisement sent by corporate bodies. This finding is supported by the study of Neti, (2012) who found that social media marketing creates room for gaining traffic and attention and the spread of word of mouth marketing through online communities, social networks and blogs. However, less than 1% of the respondents disagree with the claim of social media marketing encouraging users to share the product information with friends. This may be because such users do not engage in sharing product advertisement with other users perhaps due to lack of interest on such products or trust on such ads.

Table 4.2: Results on social media marketing encourages readers to share advertised products

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	43	28.7	28.7	28.7
Agree	59	39.3	39.3	68.0
Neutral	42	28.0	28.0	96.0
Disagree	5	3.3	3.3	99.3
Strongly Disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1 below provides the results for how social media enable smartphone companies to effectively communicate their product information with their target audience. The result shows that majority of the respondents believe that social media is a good avenue for the smartphone companies to interact more effectively with consumers thereby creating brand awareness while few respondents tend to argue otherwise. The reason why more respondents support the claim is because many social media sites are originally designed to enable people connect and share ideas and information and the case of smartphone companies, they share their product information with the target audience and this result to brand awareness. This is supported by the study of Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) that the retail industry uses this new interactive communication channel to engage their customers and encourage them to buy their products.

Figure 4.1 Results on social media use in communicating product information



To conclude, social media has provided a good avenue for smartphone companies to use this new interactive communication channel to create media contents that attract attentions and interact more effectively with their target consumers so as to encourage them not only to share the product information with their friends and families thereby resulting to the spread of word of mouth but also encouraging them to buy their products. The next section focuses on discussing specific advertising types.

4.3. Types of advertising

Table 4.3 below provides the results on fan page advertisement and the result shows that majority of the respondents agree that advertisements placed on fan pages of social media tend to generate more word of mouth marketing among the users. This indicates that when smartphone companies advertise their products on fan pages, it will generate more results because the users tend to share such product information among their friends and family members. This is because product information shared by friends and family members are more trusted since they consider them not to have any financial motive in the cause of sharing such products information. In supporting this finding, the study of Harris and Dennis, (2011) found that product advertisements placed on fan page generates more positive returns because it tends to create more brand awareness among the social media users.

Table 4.3: Results on fan page advertising generating word of mouth marketing

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	18	12.0	12.0	12.0
Agree	92	61.3	61.3	73.3
Neutral	33	22.0	22.0	95.3
Disagree	7	4.7	4.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4 below shows the results on fan page ads and the results indicates that majority of the respondents support the claim that product advertising placed on fan pages of social media generates more interest about the advertised brand among the users. This indicates that when smartphone companies advertise their smartphones through fan page, it tends to create attract more attention and interest on the product. This is because perhaps fan page is mainly created for the companies' followers and fans to freely share their views and opinions about the company as whole and the brands in particular. This is supported by the study of Dekay, (2012) that fan page advertisement enhances the effectiveness and persuasive of production promotion because unlike company's

websites, the consumers have the opportunity to comment, contribute and participate in the advertisement process.

Table 4.4: Results on fan page generating interest on ads

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	24	16.0	16.0	16.0
Agree	76	50.7	50.7	66.7
Neutral	38	25.3	25.3	92.0
Disagree	11	7.3	7.3	99.3
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.5 below shows the results for event advertising. The results show that majority of the respondents indicate that event advertisements creates favourable impression about the brand among the social media users. The reason why majority of the respondents support this claim is because event advertisement involves promoting or sponsoring certain events or good cause and many consumers prefer companies that engage in corporate social responsibilities. In supporting this claim, Belch and Belch, (2009) report a survey that 9 out of 10 consumers are willing to buy from companies that promote goods causes and events. This indicates that promoting events and causes through social media a good marketing strategy among smartphone companies because it tends to generate much favourable impression about the company and this may enhance the chances of consumers trying the product.

Table 4.5: Results on event advertising creating favourable impression about the brand

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	38	25.3	25.3	25.3
Agree	73	48.7	48.7	74.0
Neutral	33	22.0	22.0	96.0
Disagree	5	3.3	3.3	99.3
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

To conclude, the study indicates that the effectiveness of social media marketing in general and advertising in particular depends on the type of advertisement and where it is placed. For example, the study shows that advertisements placed on fan pages tends to work better than advertisements placed on companies' homepage because consumers tend to trust the former more since the messages spread from friends and family members who may not have financial motive in the spread of the information about the product. Consequently, the study indicates that fan page advertisements create more interest on the advertised brand. Lastly, it was gathered that event advertising creates favourable impression on the brand because many consumers prefer companies that promote good events and causes seeing it as a way of giving back to the society.

4.4. Product involvement

Table 4.6 below shows the results for high product involvement. The results show that majority of the respondents agree that high product involvement influences social media users to place more importance and interest on the advertised smartphone brand while few respondents seem to disagree with the claim. The reason why more respondents support this claim is because the way consumers feel about the product will determine whether they will like it or otherwise. This claim is supported by the study of Kim, *et al.* (2013) who assert that consumer's personal feelings about both the company and brand will influence the importance and interest placed on a product which is caused by the stimulation of certain circumstances.

Table 4.6: Results on high product involvement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	31	20.7	20.7	20.7
Agree	93	62.0	62.0	82.7
Neutral	22	14.7	14.7	97.3
Disagree	4	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.7 below shows the results consumer's personal feelings about the product. The results show that majority of the respondents agree that a consumer's personal feelings toward the brand will determine his/her effort to seek for information about the product although few respondents tend to disagree with this claim. This is because when consumers have a high value on the product, they will search for relevant information sources to obtain the product features and benefits. This claim is supported by Belch and Belch, (2009) that consumer decision making process involves searching for product information in order to satisfy their needs.

Table 4.7: Responses on consumer's personal feelings about the product

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	47	31.3	31.3	31.3
Agree	66	44.0	44.0	75.3
Neutral	32	21.3	21.3	96.7
Disagree	4	2.7	2.7	99.3
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.8 below shows the results of consumer's willingness to share product information. The results show that majority of the respondents agree that a consumer's interest on the advertisement will influence him/her to share the product information with other social media users. This is because when consumers perceive the product being advertise to have the required customer value at the right price, there is a higher chance of consumers sharing such information with their friends and family members both on social media and offline as indicated by the study of Bashar, *et al.* (2012). However, a less than 1% of the respondents tend to refute this claim on the basis of lack of interest and trust on the marketer believing that the sole purpose is to convince them to purchase such products.

Table 4.8: Responses on consumer's interest on the ad

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	35	23.3	23.3	23.3
Agree	76	50.7	50.7	74.0
Neutral	31	20.7	20.7	94.7
Disagree	7	4.7	4.7	99.3
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.9 below shows the results of consumer's willingness to purchase the advertised product. The results show that majority of the respondents support the claim of consumers' interest on the advertisement determining their intention to purchase the advertised smartphones. This is because advertisement placed on the fan page of social media tends to generate not only more interest on the advertised brand but also creates favourable impression and ultimately influences the consumers to try such a product.

Table 4.9: Consumer's intention to buy the advertised products

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	41	27.3	27.3	27.3
Agree	57	38.0	38.0	65.3
Neutral	42	28.0	28.0	93.3
Disagree	7	4.7	4.7	98.0
Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

To conclude, the study shows that high product involvement influences social media users to place importance and interest on the advertised product and consumers' personal feelings toward the brand will enhance their effort to seek for information about the product. This will subsequently create brand interest and ultimately the chances of buying such product. Also, the study indicates that consumers' interest on the advertisement will influence them to share product information with other social media users.

4.5. Purchase intentions of smartphones

Table 4.10 below shows the results of how social media help smartphone companies to better engage the target audience. The results show that majority of the respondents agree that social media marketing helps smartphone companies engage target audience. This is because the growing traffic on social media helps the companies to interact and communicate their product features and benefits in a participatory way with the consumers. This support the findings of Leng, *et al.* (2011) that social media do not only help smartphone companies to effectively interact with their target audience given its ability to encourage back-and-forth interaction between the consumers and the company unlike the one-way traditional media but it also encourages the readers to buy the advertised products. However, few other respondents seem to disagree with the above claims on the grounds that social media marketing tends to target a narrower domain audience.

Table 4.10: Responses on social media marketing engaging consumers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	52	34.7	34.7	34.7
Agree	77	51.3	51.3	86.0
Neutral	19	12.7	12.7	98.7
Disagree	1	.7	.7	99.3
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.10 below shows the results of how social media marketing encourage brand association. The results indicate that majority of the respondents show that social media marketing is a potential mans of encouraging brand association. This is because advertisement placed on fan page can create the spread of positive word of mouth and the consumers become brand ambassadors who will go about influencing their friends about the product values. However, one respondent seems to disagree with the foregoing claim due to perhaps unfavorable perception and behavioural attitudes about the brand or the company.

Table: 4.10: Responses on social media marketing influence on brand association

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	65	43.3	43.3	43.3
Agree	59	39.3	39.3	82.7
Neutral	22	14.7	14.7	97.3
Disagree	3	2.0	2.0	99.3
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.11 below provides the data on the persuasiveness of social media marketing. The results show that while majority of the respondents believe that smartphone companies use social media to persuade consumers that their product are good to purchase, few others seem to disagree. The result been dominated by supporters indicates that social media marketing can serve as good place to not only create brand awareness but also to convince consumers about the product values. This is supported by [Gesenhues, \(2013\)](#) that social media advertising enhances the marketers' ability to effectively communicate their product features and benefits at costs effective way so as to influence impression about the brand.

Table 4.11: The persuasiveness of social media marketing

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	47	31.3	31.3	31.3
Agree	66	44.0	44.0	75.3
Neutral	32	21.3	21.3	96.7
Disagree	3	2.0	2.0	98.7
Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.12 below provides the data on social media marketing ability to encourage trial purchase. The results show that majority of the respondents agree to smartphone companies using social media marketing to persuade consumers to buy their products. This is because the back-and-forth feature of social media enables the consumers to fully engage the companies and comment or make inquiry about the advertisement and the product features and benefits. The majority supporting the claim indicates that smartphone companies can social media to effectively interact with consumers and persuade them to buy their products through social media. This is supported by [Thackeray, et al. \(2012\)](#) that social media is a potential marketing platform to promote advertisements campaign and enhance the ability to engage the young consumers and enhance sales.

4.6. Discussions of the hypotheses

The focus here is the discussion of the hypotheses and Table 4.13 below shows the results of the hypotheses. The results show that the all the hypotheses are supported and this indicates that social media marketing significantly influences consumers' decision to buy smartphones.

Table 4.13: Results of the hypotheses

		Social media marketing	Ad type	Product involvement	Purchase intentions
Social media marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.553**	.649**	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150
Ad type	Pearson Correlation	.553**	1	.557**	.503**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150
Product involvement	Pearson Correlation	.649**	.557**	1	.564**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	150	150	150	150
Purchase intentions	Pearson Correlation	.530**	.503**	.564**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150

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

Hypothesis 1: Social media marketing effectiveness depends on the ad type

This hypothesis focuses on determining the effectiveness of social media marketing. The null and alternate hypotheses of are stated below:

H_a : Social media marketing effectiveness does not depend on the ad type

H_1 : Social media marketing effectiveness depends on the ad type

Table 4.13 above shows that while the r value is 0.503, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than the confidence level and this indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted. To this end, it is concluded that social media marketing effectiveness depends on the ad type. This finding is supported by the study of Kim, *et al.* (2007) that the effectiveness of social media marketing in persuading people to purchase products will depend on the type of advertising in question. According to this claim, advertising through fan page may be more effective in persuading users to purchase the advertised product than advertisement through the company's homepage.

Hypothesis 2: Consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones depends on the ad type

This hypothesis focuses on determining the effectiveness of ad type. The null and alternate hypotheses of are stated below:

H_a : Consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones does not depend on the ad type

H_1 : Consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones depends on the ad type

Table 4.13 above shows that while the r value is 0.503, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than the confidence level and this indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted. This indicates that consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones depend on the ad type. This supports the findings of Harris and Dennis, (2011) that advertising through fan page may encourage users to share the advertised products with their friends and families and people tend to place more trust on products recommended by their friends since they are believed not to have any financial motives.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between social media marketing and consumer's intention to purchase smartphones

This hypothesis focuses on determining the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones. The null and alternate hypotheses of are stated below:

H_a : There is no significant relationship between social media marketing and consumer's intention to purchase smartphones

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between social media marketing and consumer's intention to purchase smartphones

Table 4.13 above shows that while the r value is 0.530, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than the confidence level and this indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between social media marketing and consumer's intention to purchase smartphones and this supports the findings of a survey conducted by Dimensional Research that 90% of the respondents affirm that reading social media advertising reviews positively influence their purchase decisions as reported by Gesenhues, (2013).

Hypothesis 4: Ad type mediates social media marketing

This hypothesis focuses on determining how ad type mediates the effectiveness of social media marketing. The null and alternate hypotheses of are stated below:

H_a : Ad type does not mediate social media marketing

H_1 : Ad type mediates social media marketing

Table 4.13 above shows that while the r value is 0.553, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than the confidence level and this indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted. This indicates that ad type mediates social media marketing. This shows that the effectiveness of social media marketing will depend on the type of advertisement and the specific place of ad. For example, when smartphone companies advertise on fan page, it will enhance the effectiveness of the ad and vice versa. This is supported by Emerson, (2013) who reports that 95% of Polkadot Alley's Facebook sales come from people who purchase goods through the comments or recommendations section of the fan page.

Hypothesis 5: Product involvement mediates consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones. This hypothesis focuses on determining how product involvement mediates consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones. The null and alternate hypotheses are stated below:

H_0 : Product involvement does not mediate consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones

H_1 : Product involvement mediates consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones

Table 4.13 above shows that while the r value is 0.564, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than the confidence level and this indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted. This indicates that product involvement mediates consumer's purchase intentions of smartphones and the study of Jothi, *et al.* (2011) supports this finding that product involvement is an individual difference variable which may mediate the relationship between social media marketing and consumer's purchase intentions because consumer's personal feelings and preference for the product will determine consumers' decision making and communication behaviors.

Table 4.14 below provides the results of the Multiple Regression analysis. The results show that product involvement seems to have the more impact on consumers' intention to buy smartphones followed by social media marketing. This is because product involvement is an individual difference variable and Harris and Dennis, (2011) found that consumers are more influenced to make purchase when the product recommended by a trusted friend or family since they may not have a financial motive unlike the companies.

Table 4.14: Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.183	.185		.987	.325
Social media marketing	.240	.100	.213	2.393	.018
Ad type	.249	.094	.215	2.641	.009
Product involvement	.349	.102	.306	3.428	.001

4.7. Conclusion

On analyzing the study, it was found that companies use social media to engage their target consumers online. This indicates that social media do not only help smartphone marketers to effectively interact with their target audience given its ability to encourage back-and-forth interaction between the consumers and the company unlike the one-way traditional media but it also encourages the readers to buy the advertised products. On the findings from the hypotheses, it was found that all the hypotheses were supported and this indicates that social media marketing significantly influences consumers' decision to buy smartphones. However, this is mediated by the type of advertisement and product involvement.

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