

Chapter 12

Virtual Try-On Application and Fashion Purchase Intentions Among Gen Z Consumers in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Online shopping, integral to modern life, lacks the tactile experience of physical retail, a significant shortfall in fashion. This gap is being addressed by incorporating virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies to meld the digital and in-store experiences. This research critically examines the impact of virtual try-on (VTO) applications on Gen Z's fashion purchasing intentions in Malaysia, assessing factors like virtual presence and perceived ease of use. A quantitative approach, involving a survey with 94 participants, was taken. The study presents a novel model merging the technology acceptance model (TAM) with virtual presence. Results indicate Gen Z's overwhelming endorsement of VTO, with perceived usefulness as their main buying intention driver. These insights offer valuable direction for VTO developers, marketing strategists, and policymakers aiming to promote VTO in fashion retail.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the technology business trend propels the transition from 2D to 3D innovation, marketers are keen to broaden their horizons, and the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies continues to flourish. This surge is attributed to the fact that 3D E-commerce produces superior-quality images, enabling customers to observe product specifications, thereby mitigating the occurrence of returns. It surpasses 2-dimensional platforms like traditional E-commerce, yielding higher product match rates through improved visual search features (Billewar and colleagues, 2021). Customers can leverage the Virtual Try-on application to generate virtual models based on their measurements, facial characteristics, hair color, and body shape. Additionally, they can zoom in, rotate the product, and examine it from various angles. This technology also facilitates information retrieval (Kim & Forsythe, 2008).

Since virtual try-on technology displays items that can be worn or referred to as “garments,” it is very similar to online shopping. Many Malaysians have a strong desire to go shopping. According to E-commerce DB Country Reports 2021, 44 percent of Malaysia’s population makes online purchases, with 14 million E-commerce users referred to as “e-consumers,” the most popular categories purchased are apparel, food & beverages, and shoes. With a wealth background of 31 percent of e-consumers, this online shopping habit is compelling. Furthermore, based on public attitudes towards online shopping, the research predicts that the number of Malaysian e-consumers will increase by 27 percent to 18 million by 2025 (Eden et al., 2021).

The juxtaposition of virtual try-on technology and online shopping appears especially appropriate concerning Generation Z, a younger demographic leading the way in embracing and assimilating contemporary advancements. Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, is distinguished by its technological prowess. According to Utami (2021), Generation Z includes people born between 1998 and 2010 who began using the internet and the web as they grew older. Parents guided and encouraged their children to use social networking sites from an early age. Generation Z has grown up in a world that has always relied on technology (Murad et al., 2019). This generation has a natural affinity for quick adaptation to cutting-edge technologies, as evidenced by their embrace of innovations such as virtual try-ons.

In a nutshell despite E-commerce’s pervasive market influence, it still falls short of replacing immersive on-site shopping experiences (Lu & Smith, 2008) due to the limitations inherent in 2-dimensional platforms. Nonetheless, the virtual try-on application is emerging as a critical point of convergence for both realms, to bridge the existing gap. At the same time, Malaysia has a plethora of online shopping platforms, but only a few incorporate features that provide customers with a three-dimensional experience or collaborate with virtual try-on companies and designers to enhance benefits. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the potential of virtual try-on applications (VTO) components; (i) virtual presence (VP), (ii) perceived ease of use (PEOU), (iii) perceived enjoyment (PE), and (iv) perceived of usefulness (POU) towards purchase intention from the perspective of tech-savvy Gen Z while also serving as a valuable reference for online shopping businesses and E-commerce entities. To achieve this purpose, the remainder of the article is structured as follows: it begins with a review of relevant literature and then presents our conceptualization of the research. Following that, it describes the methods used and the data collected. The article then presents the findings and analysis and discusses their significance. The article concludes with a section on limitations and future research directions.

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