Chapter 1
Investigating Social Media Marketing Adoption Among Homestay Operators in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Social media marketing has appeared as a crucial tool for businesses to promote products and services. In the case of SMEs in Malaysia, the adoption of social media marketing remains low, particularly among homestay operators. This study investigated the factors that influence homestay operators in Malaysia to adopt social media marketing. Using a cross-sectional research design, a self-administered questionnaire was employed to collect responses from 208 homestay operators in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, and Johor. The results revealed that customer pressure and preference, as well as competitive pressure have a significant impact in influencing homestay operators to adopt social media marketing compared to perceived cost and digital skills. This study provides valuable insights to the authorities to understand social media marketing adoption among SMEs in Malaysia. Undeniably, it is a business strategy for SMEs to employ new technologies that provide extensive and effective connectivity at low cost.

INTRODUCTION

The current growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has shown the transformation of the Internet entering a new phase (Asamoah et al., 2024; Olsson & Bernhard, 2021). The utilization of the Internet changed when the transformation process it underwent shifted from a browsing platform to a transaction platform that enables users to engage in numerous online activities. The statistics reported in the Global Digital Report 2024 indicate that there were 33.59 million internet users in Malaysia as of 2024, with a penetration rate of 97.4%. Today, the Internet is not only used for personal purposes but also for business sustainability. There are five roles of the Internet in business, and they involve management, promotion, communication, product distribution and research (Carson, 2005). The transformation process of the Internet continues to occur over time, moving from a transaction platform to a social medium that offers two-way interaction. This latest generation of the Internet is more familiar as social media, and it has changed users' needs, perception, knowledge, and expectations in information searching and decision-making processes (Rejeb et al., 2022; Vila-Boix et al., 2023). Nowadays, the public has started using social media as a business platform for things involving buying and selling, making inquiries, and obtaining feedback. Through the characteristics of social media such as easily accessible, affordable, and fast, it makes today's information sharing more focused on uploading images and videos through platforms like Facebook, (X) Twitter, and YouTube (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Ma et al., 2024). As of 2024, there were 28.68 million social media users in Malaysia, equal to 83.1% of the total population (Meltwater, 2024). Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the statistics of the most favourite social media platforms among users in Malaysia and the most used social media platform in Malaysia as of May 2024, respectively.

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