

# Factors That Influence Information Seeking Practices Via Social Media: A Study of Women Entrepreneurs

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that influence women entrepreneurs in seeking information through social media. The focus of the study is to find out how attitude and behaviour would influence women entrepreneurs in seeking information while using social media. A survey questionnaire was used to gather information from women entrepreneurs who have been using social media in their business ventures. The survey was distributed at an event conducted by Women Entrepreneur Network Association (WENA) named "WENA Global Mentoring Walk 2017". This event is a venue which provides opportunities for women entrepreneurs to discuss and share professional success stories and issues related to entrepreneurship. The population size is around 700 WENA members and using the random sampling technique, a sample size of 256 was chosen out of which 201 valid responses were analysed. Smart-PLS software was used for the data analysis process. Women entrepreneurs are inclined to social media and use it for seeking information apart from general business purposes. Social media usage in seeking information among women entrepreneurs are generally driven by their: i) attitude; ii) subjective norms and iii) perceived behavioural control. The findings in this study indicate significant correlations among the variables. Facilitating conditions and perceived behavioural control demonstrated stronger correlation while perceived ease of use is the weakest. This study provides a better understanding on usage, attitude and behaviour of women entrepreneurs in using social media platform for their business ventures particularly as information seeking tool. Therefore, government agencies such as SME, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development could use these findings to develop strategic plans to provide suitable information services through social media platforms for women entrepreneurs to run their businesses.*

**Keywords:** Information Seeking; Social Media; Women; Entrepreneur; Information; Malaysia.

## INTRODUCTION

Information seeking is associated with a series of activities initiated by the need for information, proceeding to seek information from various resources, evaluate the information obtained, then later disseminate it. People used to seek information from traditionally printed and later from digital resources using various search engines such

as Google, Yahoo, etc. These days, when most people can access social media, seeking information through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is more rampant. This is supported by other literature which have reported the role of social media in information seeking such as Abidin, Kiran and Abrizah (2013) and Hamid et al (2016).

In entrepreneurship ventures, social media had influenced the way people conduct their businesses. They have taken advantage of social media platform tools to reach people in dispersed geographical locations, providing interactive communication and social activities. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other available social media platforms have extended their purposes from a social platform to that of a platform where users can seek information (Giade, Yanti and Noorhidawati, 2018). So far, very little research had been conducted to explore factors which might influence people in information seeking behaviour through social media, particularly focusing on business entrepreneurs. This study hence, seek to investigate the determinants that drive information seeking practices via social media platform.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social media have changed the way people use information. The normal practice of using social media as a communication medium and reaching out to audiences instantaneously have now expanded. People have been reported to use social media platforms to seek information particularly from social media acquaintances or network of friends and followers. Hamid et al. (2016) had reported on the role of social media in seeking information among international students. Reaves and Bianchi (2013) also had reported that people can now easily find current information using social media. A study conducted by Jones (2015) indicated that micro-blog is used to seek information related to social events and current news. Social media have been used by entrepreneurs in supporting their business activities mainly in getting relevant information related to their businesses and for marketing purposes. Entrepreneurs' engagement in social media is important since social media networks through Facebook groups, friends and followers could provide a support system for entrepreneurs especially for those who are new to business activities. Less experienced entrepreneurs need information related to training in managing their businesses, financial support and potential target markets.

Factors that drive social media usage in information seeking practices were postulated by individual attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control adopting a decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior (Taylor and Todd, 1995). The decomposed model of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is employed to provide a better understanding on attitudes when using social media for seeking information. Attitudes refer to the degree in which an individual has positive or negative thoughts to seek information through social media. In this notion, attitude is composed of:

- i. Perceived ease of use – refers to the extent to which individuals' belief that seeking information in social media platform is free from effort.
- ii. Usefulness – refers to individuals' likelihood to use social media as useful platform to seek information related to business activities

- iii. Compatibility - refers to individuals' belief that social media is well-fitted and can be utilized as a tool for information seeking
- iv. Credibility - refers to individuals' belief on trustworthiness of resources or messages gathered from social media.

Perceived behavioural control refers to individual perception on how easy or difficult it is to use social media in information seeking. It can be decomposed into:

- i. Self-efficacy - refers to individuals' belief on their capabilities to seek information using social media platform
- ii. Facilitating conditions - refers to the state that could facilitate in seeking information when using social media platform

Subjective norms refer to individuals' belief that an important person or group of people will approve and support the use of social media in seeking information. It is normally determined by the perceived social pressure from others for an individual to behave in a certain manner and their motivation to comply with these views.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Instrument Development**

This study used a five-point Likert-type measurement scale decoded as; 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. There were two questions decoded as 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often and 5=very often. The questionnaire consisted of 56 questions including demographic information. The questions were adopted from previous studies related to social media such as Cheng et al. (2015), Taylor (1995), Juniwati (2014), Norazah et al. (2011), Shih et al. (2004) and Rana et al. (2015). Table 1 shows the questionnaire items for each construct used and the references they were adopted from.

Table 1: Variables and Items of the Instrument

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>References</b>
Attitude	6	Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)
Perceived Ease of Use	5	Davis (1989)
Usefulness	6	Davis (1989)
Compatibility	3	Moore and Benbasat (1991)
Credibility	6	Yaakop et al. (2012)
Perceived Behavioural Control	5	Taylor and Todd (1995)
Self-Efficacy	6	Bandura (1986)
Facilitating Conditions	5	Taylor and Todd (1995)
Subjective Norms	4	Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)
Usage of Social Media	5	Taylor and Todd (1995)

**Sampling Technique**

The study employed a random sampling method from a total of 700 WENA memberships. Based on this, 256 sample size was required according to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Table 2 shows the distribution of the survey responses.

Table 2: Survey Response Rate

Total Sample size	256
Responses	248
Valid responses	201
Invalid responses	47
Response rate	78.5%

**Data collection**

The survey questionnaires were distributed at a WENA event namely WENA Global Mentoring Walk 2017. The event is a platform for businesswomen to share their experiences and discuss issues related to their business activities. It also allows impromptu mentorship to expand and strengthen the existing network among them. Out of 248 completed questionnaires, 201 were valid and used for the data analysis.

**Pilot Study**

To assess the reliability and validity of the survey instrument, a pilot-test was conducted. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha statistic. Varimax rotation was used to check the construct validity of the scales, which included discriminant and convergent validity. The instrument was pilot-tested among 30 business women entrepreneurs. A high reliability coefficient is scaled at 0.90 or above, 0.80 to 0.89 as very good and 0.70 to 0.79 as adequate. In the process of assessing construct and face validity, a few items were deleted. Several items were rephrased to improve readability of the sentences. The questionnaire was bilingual in English and Malay languages to facilitate the answering of the survey questions by the respondents.

**RESULTS**

**(a) Demographic**

Table 3 shows demographic data of the 201 respondents. The highest number of respondents (72.6%) were from the age group of 21-30 years old. They were mainly of Malay ethnicity (92.5%) and with Bachelors’ degree qualifications (61.2%).

Table 3: Demographic information of respondents.

Measures	Values	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	<20	4	2.0
	21-30	146	72.6
	31-40	32	15.9
	41-50	13	6.5
	>51 above	6	3.0

Ethnicity	Malay	186	92.5
	Chinese	3	1.5
	India	0	0
	Others	12	6.0
Education	PMR/SRP/LCE	5	2.5
	SPM/STPM	10	5.0
	Diploma/Professional Certificate	32	15.9
	Bachelor's Degree	123	61.2
	Master's Degree	29	14.4
	Others	2	1.0
Monthly household	Below RM1000	13	6.5
	RM1001-RM3000	76	37.8
	RM3001-RM5000	53	26.4
	Above RM5000	58	28.9

More than two thirds of the respondents (37%) earn monthly household income equivalent to Malaysian currency RM1,001 to RM3,000. Findings indicated that majority of the respondents actively partake in business as a part time venture. The nature of their businesses was mainly retailing such as mobile accessories, food & beverages, apparel, skincare products, perfume, wedding planner, home decoration, and pre-loved item. Apparel retailing seems to be a popular business among 26.7% of the respondents.

Table 4: Nature of Business among Respondents

Nature of business	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Mobile accessories	10	11.1
Food and beverages	11	12.2
Skincare product	22	24.4
Apparel	24	26.7
Home decoration	12	13.3
Pre-loved items	8	9.0
Event organizer	3	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

Notes: Open-ended questions

**(b) Validity & Reliability**

To validate measurements and to test the hypothesis, Partial Least Squares (PLS) was applied using Smart-PLS 3.2.7 software. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to evaluate the measurement model for all constructs and to ensure the measured variables in the model are consistent and systematic (Hair et al., 2010). To assess the reliability of each item and construct, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the indicators were used to estimate the measurement model. The results of convergent and discriminate validity are shown in Table 5 and Table 6. The reliability and validity were tested by analysing outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 5: Results of Convergent Validity Testing

Construct	CA	CR	AVE
Attitude	0.93	0.95	0.75
Perceived Ease of use	0.81	0.87	0.57
Compatibility	0.78	0.87	0.69
Usefulness	0.85	0.90	0.70
Credibility	0.88	0.91	0.67
Subjective Norms	0.89	0.93	0.76
Self-Efficacy	0.86	0.91	0.71
Facilitating Conditions	0.90	0.93	0.72
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.91	0.93	0.78
Usage of Social Media	0.89	0.92	0.70

Table 6: Results of Discriminant Validity

Constructs	Correlations Constructs									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Attitude	<b>0.86</b>									
2.Compatibility	0.63	<b>0.83</b>								
3.Credibility	0.76	0.70	<b>0.82</b>							
4.Self-Efficacy	0.78	0.63	0.73	<b>0.84</b>						
5.Facilitating Conditions	0.84	0.67	0.79	0.78	<b>0.85</b>					
6.Perceived Behavioural Control	0.78	0.56	0.65	0.70	0.73	<b>0.88</b>				
7.Perceived ease of Use	0.48	0.68	0.51	0.57	0.59	0.51	<b>0.76</b>			
8.Subjective Norms	0.84	0.56	0.70	0.69	0.77	0.84	0.45	<b>0.87</b>		
9.Usefulness	0.65	0.77	0.60	0.57	0.63	0.61	0.67	0.58	<b>0.84</b>	
10.Usage of social media	0.76	0.59	0.67	0.73	0.67	0.83	0.50	0.79	0.59	<b>0.84</b>

Notes: For adequate discriminant validity, the diagonal elements should be more than the corresponding off-diagonal elements

**(c) Structural Model**

Figure 1 shows the structural model with path coefficients consisting of p-values and R<sup>2</sup> value. All indicators for the outer loadings are above the threshold value of 0.5. The primary criteria to assess the structural model are the R<sup>2</sup> of endogenous latent values. The R<sup>2</sup> value for attitude is 0.63 which is considered high, whereas the R<sup>2</sup> value for perceived behavioural control is 0.58 which is considered moderate, while R<sup>2</sup> value for usage of social media is 0.73 which is also considered high.

**(d) Hypotheses testing**

The results of the structural model are shown in Table 7, where the beta values of the path coefficients indicate the combined effects of the exogenous latent variables on the endogenous latent variable. The results showed the following:

- (i) *perceived ease of use* had a significant effect on *attitude* ( $\hat{\alpha} = -0.03$ ,  $p = 0.63$ ), thus not supporting H1
- (ii) *usefulness* had a significant effect on *attitude* ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.32$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), thus supporting H2
- (iii) *compatibility* had a significant effect on *attitude* ( $\hat{\alpha} = -0.02$ ,  $p = 0.79$ ), thus not supporting H3
- (iv) *credibility* had a significant effect on *attitude* ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.59$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), thus supporting H4
- (v) *self-efficacy* had a significant effect on *perceived behavioural control* ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.32$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), thus supporting H5
- (vi) *facilitating conditions* had a significant effect on *perceived behavioural control* ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.49$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), thus supporting H6
- (vii) *attitude* had a significant effect on *usage of social media* in seeking information ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ), thus not supporting H7
- (viii) *subjective norms* had a significant effect on *usage of social media* in seeking information ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ), thus supporting H8
- (ix) *perceived behavioural control* had a significant effect on *usage of social media* in seeking information ( $\hat{\alpha} = 0.49$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), thus supporting H9

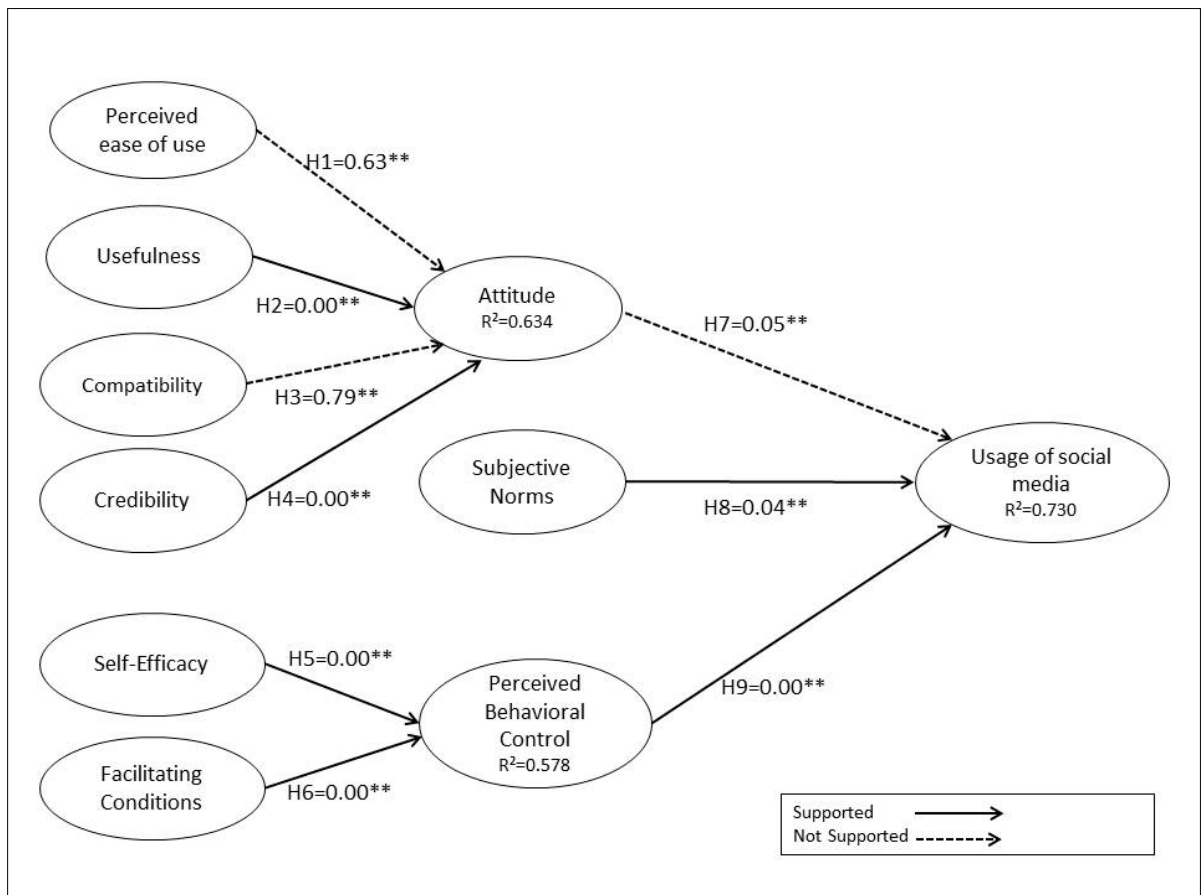


Figure 1: Path Analysis of the Structural Model

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this study are useful to provide insight on information behaviour of the participants. This study can also be useful to government agencies to provide better understanding of information behaviour among women entrepreneurs and in designing related information services to support the needs of women entrepreneurs who are actively doing businesses via online. For information providers and information centres, this study could help in preparing relevant information or resources through social media platform. This study is however limited by the small sample size focusing on women entrepreneurs. Hence, generalization of the results should be treated with caution. The research framework only reports the usage of social media as information seeking platform at an individual level. The influence of higher level constructs such as organisations or government on social media usage needs further investigation.

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