

The Influence of Facebook Apps and Activities on Purchase Intention: The Evidence from Cambodian Consumers

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ABSTRACT

Facebook has been widely used as a marketing tool for online businesses in Cambodia. It has been utilized by business owners to create relationships with customers and build trust between business owners or retailers and their customers. This study aims to examine the most important Facebook features and activities that influence consumers' purchase intentions as well as the relationship between those factors and their purchase decisions. The data in this study was obtained from an online survey of 407 respondents in Cambodia who have had an experience buying products and services via Facebook online stores. The results indicated that sharing is the most important factor which influences consumers' decision on buying products and services and influences the future consumers' purchase decision. The other important factors are positive comments, number of likes, and friends' likes. However, location check-in does not have a significant impact on the consumers' purchase intention. These findings may contribute to online business owners' or retailers' insight of Facebook features with activities so that they can well strategize to maximize their online sales on the Facebook platform.

Keywords: Purchase intention; Facebook features

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social media plays an important role in our daily lives, and it is also defined by its interactivity, connectedness, and user-generated content. Moreover, social media is typically used for social interaction, access to news and information, as well as making decisions. It is an important communication tool among people locally and worldwide, sharing, creating, and spreading information. On social media, reviews from customers, marketing strategies, and advertising from sellers can affect what people decide to buy. According to Alalwan (2018), customers are more perceptually and behaviorally engaged with specific major social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Twitter. Moreover, social media channels offer both online shopping stores and customers the new ways of engaging with each other. Online shopping stores expect to engage with loyal customers and influence individuals' perceptions about their products and services, spread information, and learn more about their audience (Schivinski & Dąbrowski, 2013).

Facebook was established by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 when he was a student at Harvard University, USA. It is widely used around the world, and also viewed as a social media platform by many countries (Devanesan, 2020). Facebook may be used for many different purposes, like socializing, figuring out who you are, getting information, making friends, and just talking (Vorn & Ly, 2020). Cambodia has a large market share of people who prefer to use Facebook as their main communication tool in daily life. Cambodians use Facebook frequently since it offers many benefits. For businesses as well as marketers, it is used as a marketing strategy for online shopping since it allows retailers to display their products in several categories. By May 2022, the number of users in Cambodia had reached around 13 million, which is equal to 79.8 percent of the entire population in this same year (17 million), with men making up 55.1 percent of the total population and women making up 45.9 percent (Napoleon Sp. z o.o., 2022).

The Facebook company has created many tools or features on the Facebook platform to facilitate business activities, such as: the Facebook Marketplace, which was announced in 2016 and, three years later, was used by 800 million users in 70 countries around the globe each month (Deshpande, 2021; Pahwa, 2021); Facebook Shops, which was launched in May

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2020 and, shortly thereafter, available in Cambodia (B2B, 2020), Facebook Ads, which was launched in 2007 and allows sellers to advertise their products or service; Facebook Messenger, which was released in 2011 and allows users to send messages, photos, and share locations in a one-to-one and group chat; and Facebook Business Manager, which was launched in 2014 (Deshpande, 2021).

Facebook offers a variety of features that display information about an online business owner's word-of-mouth on each post. On Facebook platform, there are features such as the "Like" button, "Comment," "Share," and "Location check-in" that enable online consumers to interact. In addition to these features, "Friends' likes" is regarded as a driving factor behind online purchases by customers. Therefore, in order to highlight the importance of Facebook platform so that online shops in Cambodia can make the most of it, this study will look at Facebook features and users' intentions to buy specific goods or engage in specific activities.

Research Problem

E-commerce in Cambodia is on the rise as a result of the adoption of the advanced technologies and certain limitations brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic (Devanesan, 2020; Seakleng, 2021). In the Cambodian context, e-commerce is unlike typical e-commerce in other places like America and Europe; it combines social media with traditional methods of payment and delivery service (Seakleng, 2021). Facebook, which has a number of features and a user-friendly template for creating the content, is one of the most popular social media platforms for business owners in Cambodia to advertise their products and services to the majority of the country's people (Pholreaseyh, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how various Facebook features and activities affect consumers' intention to buy products in Cambodia. The question under consideration is: "Do Facebook social media apps affect consumers' purchase decisions?" The study intends to help online stores in Cambodia figure out how important Facebook features are to their overall marketing plans and facilitate them raise customers' purchase intention and achieve their marketing objectives.

Research Objectives

The purpose of the study will be accomplished by meeting the following objectives.

1. Explore Facebook features and activities concerning online buying and selling products or services in Cambodian population.
2. Investigate how those Facebook features and activities affect the consumers' decision-making process of purchasing goods in Cambodian population.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

According to Hutter et al. (2013) and Wells et al. (2012), purchase intention refers to the mental stage in the decision-making process where the consumer has acquired an actual willingness toward a product or brand. Grewal et al. (1998) determined that purchase intention is likelihood that customers would make a certain purchase based on their own actions. Schiffman et al. (2013) discovered that customers' decision to buy a product depends largely on the product's value and recommendations that other consumers have shared, for example on social media. The use of user-generated word of mouth (WOM) and business advertising (viral marketing) results in spontaneous forwarding and recommendations by users who deem the companies deserving of attention (Hoy & Milne, 2010). Hence, Facebook apps could help online shops to accomplish many marketing aims, such as creating customers' awareness, building customers' knowledge, shaping customers' perception, and motivating customers to purchase products (Alalwan et al., 2018).

Likes

The "Like" button on Facebook, which was introduced in 2009, is one of the features that allows users to easily connect photographs, comments, and status updates to their Facebook accounts or pages. The button received numerous additional emojis in 2016. Users can react to a post with "Like," "Love," "Haha," "Wow," "Sad," or "Angry" by pressing and holding on it (Hussain et al., 2020). As a "Like" button extension in 2020, a new sort of reaction called "Care" was added. As a result, when users tap and hold the "Like" button, seven emojis flash, through which users can select one to convey their sentiment to the content.

Once the page has been liked, the user may view other fans' activities on that business page through their personal newsfeed and get business updates (Nelson-Field et al., 2012). As a result, users will see advertisements for new products, sales, recommendations, and reviews from other users (Richard & Guppy, 2014). According to the research by Lee et al. (2015), Facebook "likes" increased traffic and purchases in social commerce, which in turn boosted sales. Bhattacharyya and Bose (2020) investigated how Facebook likes affect consumers' shopping decisions and discovered that a bigger amount of likes on Facebook increases the chance of making a purchase. Additionally, according to Coursaris et al. (2014), brand equity will favorably influence customers' intentions to interact with a company's social contact points. Such interaction may take the form of liking, commenting on, or sharing a brand's profile or message on a social media platform such as Facebook.

H1: The number of "likes" on a page or an item positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.

Friends' Likes

When a user clicks "like" on a post, it displays in their news feed and notifies their friends about what they "like" on Facebook. However, a user cannot see the number of likes or other types of reactions for the posts that the other users share if he or she chooses to hide the number via privacy setting. Likewise, the number of likes or reactions under posts a user shares to his or her profile cannot be seen by other users if the poster hides the number.

Mariani and Mohammed (2014) found a significant connection between a friend's endorsement "like" and purchase intention. In addition, Harris and Dennis (2011) stated that shopping online and shopping through social networks (social e-shopping) were emerging; however, two years later the consumers were likely participating in purchases through social networks, relying on their family and friends' recommendations through Facebook reactions. Kotler and Manceau (2012) also mentioned that the importance of social factors which included family and friends influences the customers in a future purchase.

H2: The number of Facebook friends' likes on a page, or a post positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.

Location Check-in

With the location check-in feature, which was launched in 2010 (Weir, 2022), Facebook users who are on-site or nearby can check in to a page's location. Consumers can communicate where they are, what they are doing at the property, and who they are with by using the location check-in feature (Phelan et al., 2013). This app boosts word-of-mouth and location knowledge, as well as allows shops to reach out to potential customers (Richard & Guppy, 2014). When users check in on Facebook, they share information about where they are. This could be thought of as another form of e-word-of-mouth, since online reviews, photos, and other digital artifacts are shared in online communities (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In addition, the location information including users' instant and minimal reviews can be operated as evaluative pieces that are a part of community knowledge and influence community users' perception of the location (Nov et al., 2010).

H3: Location check-in positively impacts consumer purchase intention.

Positive Comment

Users can write a comment on a post on Facebook. The comment can be seen by the other users in the network (Debatin et al., 2009). Posting comments and product reviews on a platform is an example of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The comments or reviews that consumers see when researching goods and services on Facebook may affect their decision to buy (Richard & Guppy, 2014). A positive comment or review about a product may encourage buyers to buy it, while a negative review would discourage them (Mas'Od et al., 2019).

H4: Positive comments on the products positively impact the consumer purchase intention.

Sharing

Using the "share" button, users may share the new content, including images, videos, and URLs. If the user clicks "share" on the post, the content is also posted on the user's own wall and sent to their friends' newsfeeds (Malhotra et al., 2013). It's important to note that Facebook's personal and social space shows the unique way that users share information about their experiences with businesses. Unlike the general e-WOM typically found in e-commerce websites or online forums, which are

open to anyone, locations shared by Facebook users are normally limited to the friends within the user's defined interpersonal network (Kim & Chung, 2018). Ewing (2013) and Fournier and Avery (2011) have noted that consumers actually take notice of people sharing their experiences through Facebook. It would be beneficial to test the impact of friends' sharing a post and non-friends sharing a post or a page on the purchase intention.

H5: Pages sharing or content sharing positively impacts consumer purchase intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Population and sampling

This study attempted to analyze the effect of Facebook features and activities on the purchase intention of consumers in Cambodia. The data used in this study was obtained through a survey. The respondents in this study include Cambodian Facebook users. The study utilized non-probability sampling and online survey for the data collection.

Data Collection

The survey questionnaire includes two main parts: The first part is made up of questions designed to create constructs such as "Likes," "Friends' likes," "Location check-in," "Positive comments," and "Sharing," which are independent variables in the model, and "Purchase intention," which is a dependent variable. The second part is for demographic information like gender, age group, education level, and profession. This study utilizes the five-point Likert scale to rate each item with 1 "strongly disagree" through 5 "strongly agree." The items were adopted from Richard & Guppy (2014), plus newly added ones. There are three new items: one to be added to the construct "Likes", another to be added to the construct "Friends' likes," and the third to be added to the construct "Purchase intention"; and therefore, in this study there are 21 items (Appendix A).

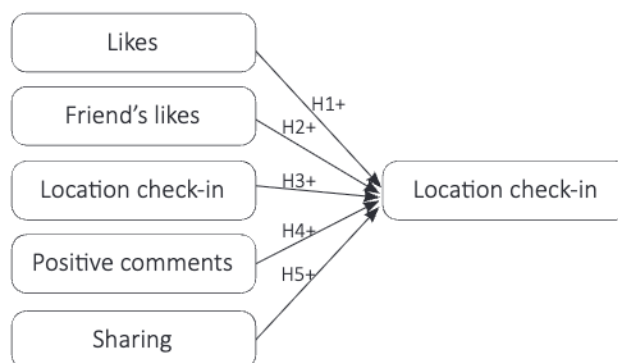
The data were gathered through a survey in which a self-administered questionnaire with questions in English along with Khmer translations was created in Google form and the link was distributed to various Facebook and Telegram groups. Respondents were asked to forward the link to others whom they think have the potential for the study.

The survey received 518 responses. There were no missing values nor outliers because restrictions on responses was set in the Google form. However, a number of cases were deleted from the sample due to what is called "respondent misconduct"; the respondents gave exactly the same score or almost the same to all items measuring the constructs. Collier (2020) suggests deleting the responses with a standard deviation of scores below 0.25. After cleaning the data, the number of valid responses used in the analysis was 407. The sample size of 407 is sufficient for the study. According to Cochran (1977), using 95% confidence level and the margin of error of 5% the minimum size of the sample drawn from an infinite population (or from a large population) was calculated to be 385.

Data Analysis

Prior to the analysis, data cleaning was implemented with Microsoft Excel 365. Demographic data were summarized using frequencies and percentages. Thereafter, the data analysis was done by using the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, implemented with R software in RStudio, using a package named "SEMinR". The model for this study is presented in Figure 1.

Research Model for the study



Note: Adapted from the literature

Figure 1: SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1

PLS-SEM can link the set of independent variables to multiple dependent (response) variables, handle many independent variables, even when predictors show multicollinearity, and can be used as a regression model to predict one or more dependents from a set of one or more independents (Garson, 2016, p. 8). The main benefit of PLS-SEM is that it lets researchers estimate complex models with many constructs, indicator variables, and structural paths without making assumptions about how the data should be distributed (Hair et al., 2019).

The measurement model was evaluated by examining the indicator loadings, the internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Finally, for the structural model, bootstrapping method was used to estimate the path coefficients, and then the model was assessed to determine which hypotheses are supported.

Bootstrapping, in a nutshell, is a non-parametric resampling process that analyzes the variability of a statistic by assessing the variability of the sample data, as opposed to adopting parametric assumptions to evaluate the precision of the estimates (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). In reference to Mooney et al. (1993) and Wood (2005), bootstrapping has several significant benefits: 1) the approach is simple and doesn't require a lot of mathematical or probability theory expertise; 2) the method's statistical assumptions aren't very restricted; 3) bootstrapping is generally applicable and provides a solution in circumstances where conventional methods could be challenging or impossible to obtain (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016).

The item loadings, composite reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha (CA), and the average variance extracted (AVE) were analyzed and shown in Table 1. These findings indicate that the measurement model has internal consistency and good composite reliability and convergent validity. Furthermore, the discriminant validity was also analyzed. This measure assesses how different a construct is from other constructs in the structural model empirically (Hair Jr et al., 2021). One of the assessment metrics is the Fornell-Larcker criterion which is called the traditional metric and found to have weaknesses as discussed by Hair Jr et al. (2021). Therefore, the discriminant validity of the model in this study was assessed by using heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). All the HTMT values are below the threshold value of 0.90. Moreover, no 95% bootstrap confidence interval contains the value of 1. These indicate that there is no discriminant validity issue (Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, the measurement model assessment has at least a fairly good discriminant validity.

Table 1: Loadings, reliability, and validity

Construct	Item	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Like (LK)	LK1	0.803	0.782	0.860	0.609
	LK2	0.808			
	LK3	0.850			
	LK4	0.644			
Friends' like (FL)	FL1	0.803	0.876	0.915	0.728
	FL2	0.856			

	FL3	0.893			
	FL4	0.860			
Location check-in (CI)	CI1	0.829	0.780	0.872	0.695
	CI2	0.803			
	CI3	0.868			
Positive comment (CT)	CT1	0.779	0.695	0.829	0.618
	CT2	0.763			
	CT3	0.816			
Sharing (SH)	SH1	0.861	0.811	0.888	0.726
	SH2	0.814			
	SH3	0.880			
Purchase intention (PI)	PI1	0.779	0.797	0.866	0.618
	PI2	0.782			
	PI3	0.752			
	PI4	0.828			

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information

The respondents' demographic information, such as gender, age, education level, and occupation has been summarized using frequencies and percentages as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic information of the respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	218	53.6
	Male	180	44.2
	Unidentified	9	2.2
Age	Under 20	101	24.8
	20-39	265	65.1
	40-59	41	10.1
Education	High school or below	14	3.4
	Bachelors	322	79.1
	Master	58	14.3
	Doctorate	7	1.7
	Others	6	1.5
Occupation of Respondents	Public sector job	99	24.0
	Private sector job	94	22.8
	Student	182	44.2
	Businessperson	3	0.7
	Self-employed person	12	2.9
	Homemaker	7	1.7
	Others	15	3.6

Collinearity

Collinearity is a condition where two independent variables are correlated. When three or more variables are related, the condition is called multicollinearity (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Therefore, multicollinearity refers to the situation in which three or more independent variables in a regression model are linearly related to each other (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019; Shrestha, 2020). One of the assumptions in regression analysis is to check multicollinearity. In this research, the structural regression model with five predictor constructs, which are independent variables, was analyzed. According to Hair Jr et al. (2021) the collinearity in the model must be examined and the variance inflation factor (VIF) can be used as one of the tools for the assessment of collinearity issues. Hair Jr et al. (2021) mentioned that all VIF values should be less than 5 but according to Becker et al. (2015), and Mason and Perreault Jr (1991), collinearity can also happen with VIF values as low as 3-5. The VIF of each independent variable in this research model was calculated. The highest value of VIF is 2.639 for Friends' likes (FL), that is, all values are below 3. These results indicate that there are no collinearity issues.

Structural Model

To analyze the significant impact of LK, FL, CI, CT, and SH on PI, the path coefficients (standardized coefficients) of the model as shown in Figure 1 were estimated by using bootstrapping method (resampling) which adopted 10,000 bootstrap samples, the minimum number recommended by Hair Jr et al. (2021). The magnitude and sign of the path coefficients along with the t-values and the 95% confidence intervals are presented in Table 3. All independent variables, except for CI, have a significant impact on the dependent variable PI.

Table 3: The path coefficient and its t-value and the 95% CI

Path	Coefficient (t-value)	95%CI	Results
LK→PI	0.110 (2.371)	(0.020, 0.202)	Supported
FL→PI	0.107 (1.962)	(0.001, 0.214)	Supported
CI→PI	0.035 (0.610)	(-0.079, 0.147)	Not supported
CT→PI	0.165 (3.413)	(0.071, 0.260)	Supported
SH→PI	0.409 (6.680)	(0.291, 0.529)	Supported

Note: 95% CI = 95% Confidence Interval

The coefficient of determination (R^2), which is the proportion of the endogenous variable's variance and is also known as the model's exploratory power with regard to that endogenous variable (Hair Jr et al., 2021) is 51.9%. This magnitude of the proportion is adequate; that is, it is above 10% (Falk & Miller, 1992). Sharing (SH) has the most significant positive impact on purchase intention (PI). The second largest impactful factor is positive comment posting (CT), next number of likes (LK), and lastly Friends' likes (FL). The impact of location check-in (CI) on the purchase intention is not significant. The full model is presented by the diagram in Figure 2.

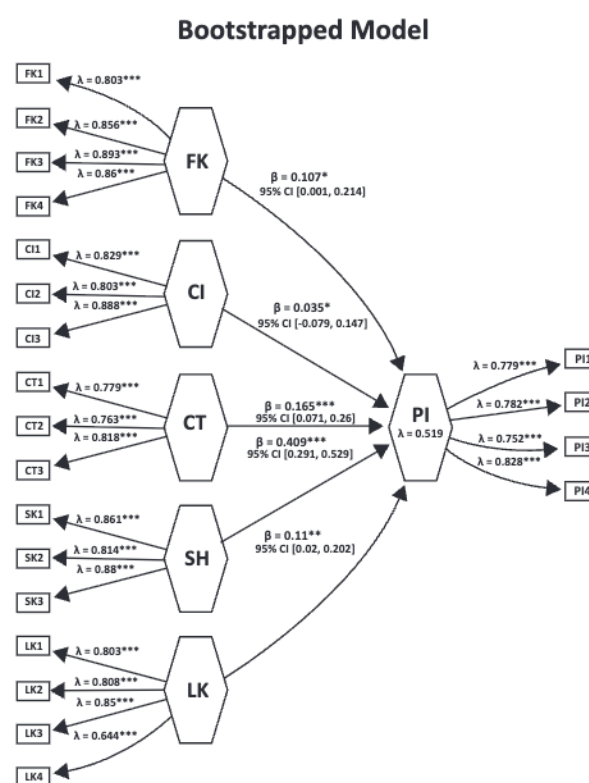


Figure 2: Full model of the study

Note. This figure is the output of RStudio. The thickness of the arrows represents the significance of the coefficients in the model.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The goal of this study is to determine how different Facebook features and activities influence Cambodian consumers' propensity to purchase goods.

Hypothesis 1 (H1) is supported. Liking a Facebook page or post positively impacts the purchase intention. This finding is consistent with the finding of Richard and Guppy (2014) who discovered that an advertisement

of new items, discounts, recommendations, and reviews by others will be seen by the user. This finding agrees with Nelson-Field et al. (2012), who discovered that when a page has been liked, the user receives business updates and the ability to observe other fans' activity within that business page through their newsfeeds.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) in this study is supported. The number of friends' likes has a positive relationship with purchase intention. This result is in agreement with a previous study by Mariani and Mohammed (2014), who found a significant connection between a friend's endorsement "like" and purchase intention. According to Kotler and Manceau (2012), family and friends influence the customers' future purchases.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) is not supported. The study concludes that the relationship between location check-in and purchase intention is not significant. This finding is in contrast with Richard and Guppy (2014), who revealed that this Facebook feature boosts word-of-mouth and location knowledge, as well as allows shops to reach out to potential customers. However, Slutsky (2010) mentioned that customers used the check-in function just to get the traditional coupons and a discount for their purchase of goods. Besides that, Bai and Sun (2021) also stated that a location-based social application indeed provides users with a platform to present themselves and document their daily life to become a repository of individual memories and storytellers in their personal lives. On the other hand, the Facebook location check-in feature can contribute to memory storage by offering new ways for users to record current feelings, ideas, and experiences, especially those related to places, and it is not relevant to future purchases of goods.

Hypothesis 4 (H4) is supported. The positive comments posting has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention. The result agrees with Debatin et al. (2009), who stated that comments can be seen by the other users in the network. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) also found that leaving a positive comment or writing a product review on a platform is an example of electronic word-of-mouth which affect consumer decisions to purchase.

Lastly, hypothesis 5 (H5) is supported. The result indicates that page sharing, or content sharing, has the most impact on future purchase intention. The research finding is also consistent with Fournier and Avery (2011) and Ewing (2013), who have noted that consumers take notice of people sharing their

experiences through Facebook. So, sharing on Facebook makes consumers more interested and helps each Facebook post reach more customers.

Implication

The potential of Facebook features and activities as a mechanism to affect consumers' purchase intentions should be recognized by researchers when most consumers express interest in the number of likes, the number of friends' likes, comments, shared posts, as well as any type of business or pop-up advertisement on Facebook. Marketers in Cambodia may utilize this information to build and improve their business pages to get more traffic or customer interaction by creating new contents and posting more frequently to attract more page views. The online shops can invite famous influencers to make a short video and use their photos to promote their products and services to interact with Facebook's users. Facebook advertisements should be bought by retailers on the social media platform since it has a big impact on consumer's intention to purchase.

LIMITATIONS

This study was conducted with the analysis of the primary data of consumers in Cambodia who have experience with Facebook online shopping, which is based on some Facebook features and activities: likes, friends' likes, positive comment posting, sharing, and location check-in. There are several limitations to this study. Facebook may introduce more features; an example is the automatic response sent to Facebook Messenger when a user clicks a post. Those new features of Facebook applications should be included in the model for future study. On the other hand, since the purchase intention can be thought of as the mental stage of making-decision, there could be a difference due to the gender, age group, or social status of the consumers. Therefore, the model in the research should be extended by considering these factors. Furthermore, Facebook usage may be impacted by culture; hence, this study should not be extrapolated to populations from other cultures. In addition, future research on online shoppers' purchase intentions may also consider different platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or others as well.

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