

## The Internal Influences of Consumers' Online Shopping of Wooden Products During COVID-19 Pandemic

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**To Link this Article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14574> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14574

**Published Date:** 06 September 2022

### Abstract

Online shopping is the present future trend of shopping. However, the usage of online shopping platforms seems to be a new norm not just because of technological advances but due to the pandemic COVID-19. This study was focused more on wooden products since there were a limited number of studies about these products, especially in Malaysia. There are four items of internal influences that were considered: ease of use, experience, time management, and lifestyle that will influence online shopping of wooden products by Malaysians. The study aims to identify the most influential internal factors influencing the online shopping intention of wooden products during the pandemic outbreak by Malaysians. The survey was executed between June to July 2021 during the Movement Control Order (MCO) of COVID-19. The data was collected online using a form questionnaire distributed via social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, which covers 464 respondents. Later the data were analysed by multi-linear regression technique using SPSS ver. 26. The results of the study found that lifestyle is the most influencing factor towards online shopping, with a standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.410. This is followed by experiences with 0.139, time management with 0.132 and ease of use with 0.076. The researcher concluded that changes in lifestyle into new norms, especially during Movement Control Order (MCO), lead the changes in consumers' behaviour in purchasing goods. Besides, the online marketplace puts all the information at their fingertips, which facilitates consumers to purchase online.

**Keywords:** Online Shopping, Pandemic COVID-19, Internal Influences, Wooden Products, Malaysia

**Introduction**

Generally, online shopping platforms were existed for a long time ago. According to the study by Lufkin (2020), online shopping was first invented in 1979 by the entrepreneur Michael Aldrich in the United Kingdom. The platform was used as the online transaction process between businesses and consumers via a telephone line in the earliest form. The system was launched in 1980 and sold in other countries such as Ireland and Spain in the form of a Business to Business (B2B) system. Unfortunately, without the presence of the internet, the online marketplace will not exist. In 1990, the first-ever web browser known as World Wide Web Browser was invented by Tim Berners Lee. The web browser benefits people to access online shopping websites. In 1994, Amazon.com became the first biggest online platform introduced by Jeff Bezos, followed by Alibaba.com, invented by Jack Ma in 1999.

In Malaysia, an online shopping platform was started in 2004 with the launch of eBay Malaysia (Aprameya, 2020). Then, it was followed by Lelong.com around 2007 and attracted more than 9.56 million consumers per month. Thus, the Malaysian online marketplace became more dominant in 2012 when Lazada and Zalora took place in Malaysian operations, followed by the presence of Shopee in 2015. In more years come, there are numerous online shopping platforms have been launched in Malaysia, and that has made Malaysia quickly become one of the largest marketplaces in Southeast Asia.

There are a lot of previous studies on online shopping conducted in Malaysia and other countries, especially about consumer behaviour and intention, influence factors, and the latest research closely related to current issues, which is pandemic COVID-19 (Wen et al., 2020; Shariff & Izzati, 2021; Balasuridan et al., 2018; Pandey & Parmar, 2022). Unfortunately, most studies do not focus on wooden products, particularly in Malaysia. The statistic in UNCTAD (2020) stated the percentage of fall average online spending per month for wooden products (home furniture and household products) decreased by about 53%, making wooden products the second place lowest purchase after tourism and travel business. This happened at the early stage during the first Malaysian Movement control (MCO) in March 2020, which was the stage where people tried to adapt to the new norms during that time. However, Shoji et al (2014) once mentioned in the study that wooden products (furniture) are among the most influential in the market. So, the researcher believed wooden products easily increased the purchase level on online platforms. Therefore, it is very important to study the marketing method and understand the consumers' needs, especially during the pandemic, to influence consumers to purchase the products through online shopping. The impacts of pandemic COVID-19 on wooden products vary within countries (Pirc et al., 2021). According to Hayes & Morgan (2020), the isolation and roadblocks during the pandemic caused many consumers to fill their free time with home renovation projects, increasing demand for wooden products. As stated before, there is a study on online shopping during the pandemic in Malaysia but not specific on wooden products. Several researchers from Malaysia, such as Wen et al (2020), conducted a study to investigate the internal factors of consumers' intention to engage in online shopping in Malaysia. Based on the analysis, the researchers found the customers' intention to shop online in Malaysia is significantly affected by consumers' behaviour toward online shopping and perceived behavioural control. Meanwhile, Shariff and Izzati (2021) found that the factors affecting the consumers to shop online are convenience, product variety, trust, and promotion buying behaviour for online shopping in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the study stated

convenience, product variety, trust, and promotion affected Malaysian consumers' buying behavior during the pandemic. As stated in the study conducted by Balasurdan et al (2018), Online consumer shopping behaviour is formed by the trust, attitude, shopping experiences, and shopping enjoyment influenced the online shopping behaviour of consumers. In addition, another previous study stated that consumers' online shopping behaviour is influenced by several factors like internal influences such as self-efficacy, perceived credibility, and performance expectancy (Pandey & Parmar, 2022).

Thus, this study was focused on conducting the test on internal influences factors by analysing four items which are ease of use, experiences, time management, and lifestyle. These items under internal factors believed can influence Malaysians to purchase wooden products online throughout the MCO due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers had identified the level of influence between the four items from the most influential to the less influential towards online shopping intention of wooden products by Malaysians.

### **Internal Influences**

Internal factors reflect an individual's traits and experiences, which influence their decision-making approach to online shopping and can even lead to impulsive purchases (Bhattacharjee & Chetty, 2019). Internal factors include ease of use, personal experience, personal traits and time management. Meanwhile, Rahman and Esha (2018) identified time management as the most important factor influencing people to shop online.

The previous study found that most consumers shop online to manage time and can buy a lot of things simultaneously (Daroch et al., 2020). The other item found under the internal influence is experience. There was evidence that the frequency of shopping levitates when the consumers become more experienced in online purchasing. The study was confirmed by (Chen and Barnes, 2007; Zuroni and Goh, 2012; Jarvenpaa et al., 1997; Hoque et al., 2015). Furthermore, the researchers found that perceived ease of use which comes from experience, assists in embracing online shopping behaviour (Rahman & Esha, 2018).

Lifestyle also is one of the elements under internal influences on online shopping behaviour. The study about the "Attitude and lifestyle's influence on online shopping among newly married woman in Bhubaneswar city, India" conducted by Das (2018) proved that attitude without lifestyle did not influence online purchases, but the combination of attitude and lifestyle will influence consumers toward online shopping. The researcher also stated that the online seller should pay more attention to the changing lifestyle pattern and behaviour, especially among newly married women. The researcher believed the impact on the newly married woman is huge as the lifestyle changes after marriage (Das, 2018). However, the researcher did not state specifically the lifestyle changes experienced by a newly married woman in India, but another study conducted by Maqbool and Atiq (2014) said a newly married woman in India nowadays is not only burdened by a heavy responsibility as a housewife, but the woman also plays a role as the "chief-purchaser" in the family. The researcher believed these situations not only occurred in India but also in other countries too. Since women hold both responsibilities, they are willing to buy goods online as online shopping will facilitate them as housewives more than physical shopping.

However, for this study, the researchers use different internal factors that will influence online shopping among Malaysians to purchase wooden products online during the MCO pandemic COVID 19. These factors are ease of use, experiences, time management, and lifestyle.

**Ease of Use**

Ease of use is the level of particular communication technology that can be used without much effort (Olaniran et al., 2013). Besides, refer to the study conducted by Auh et al (2010) defined ease of use as the capability to search desired information, helpfulness of the information provided, speed of loading, navigability, website design, font size, finding needed services, whether the observer would recommend the website to a friend or relative, and comfort using the internet to get information. In addition, Childers et al (2001) found that online shopping platforms that require the least mental effort to make a purchase or easy-to-understand processes attract more potential customers than complicated ones. Another finding by Ramayah and Lo (2007) is that the conventional system will be more useful from the consumer's perception.

However, the previous study by Venkatesh (2000) stated ease of use was found to be a slightly lower predictor of the intention to shop online. Therefore, from the researchers' perspective, the platform believed will facilitate consumers to purchase goods, especially during the pandemic outbreak. In the same, some online shopping websites still need some effort to use when the system is complicated, such as difficult to make the payment, challenging to sign in as the website requires a lot of details and others.

**Experiences**

The study by Cadirci and Kose (2018) defined the shopping experience as a sequence of events that customers involve in and use during purchasing, which increases with the encouragement created by the company to gain positive emotions before and after shopping. Apparently, shopping experiences are more related to consumers' perceptions, feelings, emotions and sensations towards the usage of online shopping. The previous study found that the source economic value, customization, customer service, and post-purchase experience are the most outstanding catalysts of online customer experience (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020).

Furthermore, Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018) also indicate that shoppers seize other shoppers' experiences through reviews or feedback as a matching platform to involve in various levels of attitudes. The other study found that experience is the most robust generator of self-efficacy (Rose et al., 2012). The researchers also stated that generating positive experiences has gained greater prominence because it leads to customer loyalty (Rose et al., 2012). According to Swapana and Padmavathy (2017), a better experience shows consumers to use the online shopping platform more since it reduces the search costs, especially when the consumer is under time pressure.

**Time Management**

Referring to the research conducted by Claessens et al (2007), time management has been described in numerous ways. According to Pettit (2020), the importance of managing time is to save time, allow to be more productive, lower stress, and create a better work-life

balance. Meanwhile, for this study, the researchers define time management as attitudes that focus on effective use of time while carrying out the specific goal-directed tasks to be accomplished within a targeted time.

Srivastava (2016) stated in his study that no other mechanisms save time more than purchasing through an online shopping platform. During in-store shopping, the consumers have to stand for hours at a payment counter just to pay for several goods they choose to buy. The other problem found during the outbreak was a traffic jam due to the roadblocks at many places, causing a lot of time wasted to reach the physical store because of very slow-moving traffic. Luckily, the existence of online shopping assists consumers in managing their time in purchasing goods because the consumers do not have to go through traffic jams anymore (Dwivedi et al., 2020). They can easily pick up the goods online while lying on the bed at home. Jati (2020) found that time-saving is the top influencing factor for online shopping intention.

### **Lifestyle**

According to Ntloko (2020), lifestyle is a behavior of an individual based on interests, culture, activities, opinions or other characteristics that differentiate between a person. Another study by Solomon (2006) defined the lifestyle of consumers reflects the trend of consumption according to the way the consumer spends time and money on shopping. According to the previous study, lifestyle influences consumer behaviour and global marketing because every day, customers always have to decide whether to buy specific items (Zhu et al., 2009). A study in 2018 found that the lifestyle hit consumer behaviour strongly to shopping online compared to an individual's personality (Gu et al., 2021). The findings by Barbu (2021) during COVID-19 stated among the indicators that drove the consumers to use more online platforms due to changes in lifestyle such as the rising number of Internet users, awareness of online purchasing, more releasing of online products, also the low prices given in bulk purchases.

In the researcher's view, the situations during Movement Control Order (MCO) during pandemic COVID -19 leads to lifestyle changes. Before the pandemic, consumers used to purchase goods by physical shopping, but during MCO, consumers had to use online shopping to buy goods due to the store's closing and isolation at home. Thus, people must adapt to this new lifestyle because it has become a norm during MCO. Furthermore, referring to the study by Isa et al (2020), online platforms have become a popular medium to purchase for both customers and traders since the pandemic occurred.

### **The Research Framework**

The Theory Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Icek Azjen (1985) was employed to achieve the study's objective. TPB is a model in social psychology studies about personal behaviour built with three main variables: attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control as independent variables that will trigger an individual's intention towards their behaviour as the model's dependent variable. This theory has become influential and most used to study human social behaviour. It has been used to investigate the relationships between beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions, and behaviours in various fields, including advertising, marketing, public relations, tax compliance, healthcare, education, and many others (Conner & Norman, 2015).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was applied to this study as the research related to human social behaviour. The independent variables were replaced with ease of use, experiences, time management and lifestyle. While the dependent variable was replaced by online shopping intention for wooden products. The research framework model is illustrated in Figure 1.

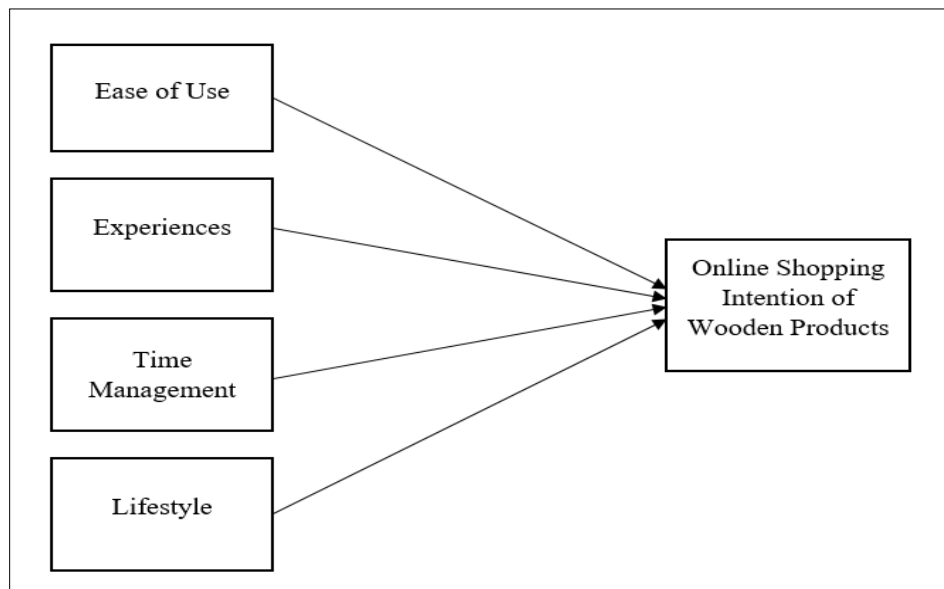


Figure 1: The research framework of internal factors of online shopping for wooden products

### Materials and Methods

Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula has been used to acquire several samples from the total number of populations in Malaysia, which is 32.75 million people (DOS,2021). According to this formula, the maximum population is 1,000,000 (N), and the number of samples must not exceed 384 (n). Therefore, the number of respondents for this study was 464 samples.

This study deployed the quantitative survey technique with a closed-ended questionnaire as the research instrument in collecting the data. The questionnaire was developed using Google Form after data collection during MCO. The questionnaire contains eight sections (Section A until Section H) with an overall of 58 questions, but in this study, only Section A (Demographic factors) and Section D (Internal influences) were involved. Section A was set as multiple-choice questions, while Section D was set on the Likert scale and rated from 1-10 (1 for strongly disagree and 10 for strongly agree).

The online questionnaire was distributed to the respondents randomly all over Malaysia (Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak) through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram in June 2021 within one month during MCO in Malaysia. The 464 samples were collected as primary data, which is higher than the target (384) set in Krejcie and Morgan's table 1970. Plus, the study was added with secondary data from academic journals related to this study.

## Results and Discussions

The data of 464 respondents were analysed using a chart and SPSS ver. 26. The chart was used to calculate the frequency and percentage (%) of the descriptive of respondent's profile, and SPSS ver. 26 was used to acquire the most influential factors that influenced online shopping of wooden products during pandemic COVID-19 by Malaysians.

### Descriptive of Respondent's Profile

The descriptive analysis of the respondent's profile was analyzed in frequencies and percentages. It consists of gender, age, race, marital status, profession, monthly income, residence, and region, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *Respondent's Profile*

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	174	37.5
Female	290	62.5
Age		
18-25	222	47.8
26-35	78	16.8
36-40	43	9.3
41-50	96	20.7
51-60	25	5.4
60 and above	-	-
Race		
Malay	436	94.0
Chinese	7	1.5
Indian	9	1.9
Bumiputera Sabah	8	1.7
Bumiputera Sarawak	4	0.9
Marital Status		
Single	241	51.9
Married	219	47.2
Divorce	4	0.9
Profession		
Unemployed	24	5.2
Government sector	165	35.6
Private sector	83	17.9
Self-employed	48	10.3
Student	139	30.3
Retired	5	1.1
Monthly Income		
B40 (Less than RM4360)	246	53.0
M40 (RM4360-RM9619)	153	33.0
T20 (RM9619 and above)	56	14.0
Residence		

Rural	110	23.7
Suburban	95	20.5
Urban	464	55.8
Region		
Peninsular Malaysia	450	97.0
Sabah and Sarawak	14	3.0

N=464

The percentage of female respondents was 25% more than male respondents. The youngest generation at age 18-25 years old was 47.8% involved in this survey, followed by Gen- X (41-50 years old) at 20.7%, and the baby boomer generation (50-60 years old) was the smallest involved in this survey at 5.4%. There were no respondents from the age of 60 and above who assumed they do not have social media applications like WhatsApp, Instagram or Facebook. Malay was the majority response to the survey at 94.0% compared to other races. There were a small number of respondents among married and single, which was only a 4.7% gap.

The government workers covered the majority sample of this study at 35.6%, followed by a student at 30.3% and only 1.1% of retired respondents. The respondents in category B40 (Less than RM4360) were the highest response to the survey at 53%, followed by M20 (RM4360-RM9619) and T20 (RM9619 and above) at 33% and 13%, respectively. The people who live in the urban area became a high percentage (55.8%) as the sample of this study, followed by respondents living in rural and suburban at 23.7% and 20.5%, respectively. Most of the respondents were from Peninsular Malaysia, 97% and only 3.0% were from Sabah and Sarawak.

### The Most Influence Internal Factors Towards Online Shopping During Covid-19

The multi-linear regression technique in SPSS version 26 was used to test the level of influence between the independent variables (ease of use, experiences, time management and lifestyle) toward the dependent variable (online shopping intention on wooden products). The probability value (p-value) was used to consider the significant level of coefficient path of the dependent variables on online shopping intention. In this study, the probability value (p-value) is significant if the threshold of the p-value is equal to or below 0.05 (5%). Table 2 shows the results of the analysis.

Table 2

#### *The most influenced internal factors*

Variable	B	95% CI	$\beta$	t	p
Ease of use	0.383	(-0.189, 0.955)	0.076	1.316	0.189
Experiences	0.767	(0.190, 1.345)	0.139	2.611	0.009
Time management	0.688	(0.094, 1.282)	0.132	2.276	0.023
Lifestyle	1.803	(1.401, 2.204)	0.410	8.821	0.000

Note.  $R^2_{adj} = 0.423$  (N= 464, p= 0.000). CI= confident interval for B



The coefficient and p-value results based on Table 2 showed that experiences, time management and lifestyle significantly affect online shopping intention for wooden products (p-value= 0.05) with 0.009, 0.023 and 0.000, respectively. However, a probability value of ease of use over the threshold (p-value= 0.05) with 0.189 indicated that the variable has an insignificant effect towards online shopping intention. Besides, the magnitude varies from each other. The coefficient between experiences to online shopping intention on wooden products was statistically significant, with the regression coefficient at 0.767. Both time management and lifestyle were statistically significant, with regression coefficients of 0.688 and 1.803, respectively. The last one is ease of use which tested statistically insignificant towards intention with a regression coefficient of 0.383.

Based on the table, the ease of use is placed at the lowest level of the most influential variable towards online shopping intention on wooden products, with a standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.076. In the researcher's view, some online shopping platforms still lack such difficulty in signing in and making payments. Sometimes, the process during purchase is complicated since some platforms do not give clear instructions to use the website. This statement also agreed with the previous study that stated that ease of use was found as a slightly lower attraction for consumers to shop online because of the bad customer service and outdated information (Venkatesh, 2000). This proved the previous study by Childers et al (2001), which found that online shopping platforms require the least mental effort to purchase and easy to understand the processes were really attracting more potential customers.

The experiences of online shopping place at the second level of most influence on online shopping with  $\beta= 0.139$ . From the researcher's view, consumers used online shopping once they tried shopping through the online website since they know how to use it. Moreover, when the usage of online shopping is easy to use. This result is supported by Dai et al (2013), who stated that the online shopping experience is a strong positive predictor of online shoppers' purchase intentions. Previous studies also noted that post-purchase experience is one of the most outstanding catalysts of the online customer experience effect (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020).

The third place is time management, with a standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.132 as the most influential factor for Malaysian online shopping of wood products during MCO. During MCO, most businesses have limited operation hours or must close their shops as instructed by the Malaysian government. With limited hours of business operation, the time-consuming take longer, because many customers do shopping at one time added, have to queue up to do the shopping and make payment. Therefore, people prefer to do online shopping for necessary goods and unnecessary items like wood products for time-saving. As Dwivedi et al (2020) found from their study, the respondents agreed the usage of online platforms assists in managing time during shopping by avoiding wasting time on traffic issues and having flexible time to choose the goods to purchase. It is similar to the result of a study by Srivastava (2016) found that using an online shopping platform will save much time compared to physical shopping.

From the analysis, the factor of lifestyle gained the highest score with  $\beta = 0.410$  that, became the most influence on the Malaysians to do online shopping for wood products during MCO. From the researcher's view, lifestyle gained the highest score because, based on the literature review, a person's lifestyle will constantly change and affect their shopping behaviour. For instance, the attitude toward buying goods and lifestyle of married people changed since they have another responsibility that needs to be carried out. Plus, the researcher also believed it happened due to the increase in IT savvy among the consumers, especially the younger generations. The study conducted by Barbu (2021) stated that during COVID-19, the indicators that drove the consumers to use more online platforms is because of many changes in lifestyle, such as the rising number of Internet users, awareness of online purchasing, more releasing of online products, and also the low prices given in bulk purchases. This statement also parallels the researchers' perspective that the change of lifestyle during MCO encourages people to purchase online.

### **Conclusions**

Most of the respondents are female, and most of them are aged 18-25 years old from Peninsular Malaysia. It can conclude that the changes in lifestyle during MCO implementation had influenced consumers to purchase goods via online platforms and turned out to be a new norm since the pandemic. Furthermore, the experiences in online shopping affected the consumers' interest to keep purchasing on an online website or encouraged the customers to be loyal to the online purchase mechanism. Besides that, the usage of the online marketplace assists the consumers in managing their time, especially since nowadays people are busy with work and do not have enough time to go physical shopping. This study also found that ease of use influences people to shop online. According to the researcher, some online shopping websites are complicated to use by certain consumers, especially for the older generations of baby boomers from 50 years old and above. Most older generations were not proficient with the usage of IT, unlike the younger generations. The other reason the lifestyle is the main factor that influences online shopping is the excellent internet service in Malaysia and the existence of many sites on the online marketplace. So, it will facilitate the consumers more when they want to search and purchase the goods since they have many choices. In addition, smartphone usage has become essential nowadays, and people are really into the use of technology as it is along with the circulation of time and suitable with the current situations.

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