DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTIONS FOR AGRO-BASED PRODUCTS THROUGH AFFILIATE MARKETING IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *This study examines the factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions for agro-based products through affiliate marketing in Malaysia. Despite the agro-based sector's significant contribution to food security, employment, and rural income, many enterprises struggle to leverage digital platforms to engage younger consumers who prefer online shopping. This research focuses on four key determinants, product perception, convenience, social influence, and trustworthiness and their relationship with purchase intentions. A quantitative design was employed using a self-administered survey with 384 respondents aged 18 and above residing in urban and suburban regions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) via SPSS. Findings revealed that trustworthiness exhibited the strongest positive relationship with purchase intentions (r = 0.865, p < 0.001), followed by convenience, social influence, and product perception. EFA confirmed the validity of the four-factor structure (KMO = 0.957). Overall, product perception emerged as the most dominant factor shaping purchase decisions, underscoring the importance of perceived quality and value. These results provide practical implications for agro-based entrepreneurs and marketers in designing effective affiliate marketing strategies to enhance consumer confidence, convenience, and trust.*

Keywords: *purchase intention, agro-based products, affiliate marketing, consumer behavior,*

Introduction

The agro-based sector plays a vital role in Malaysia's economy, contributing substantially to food supply, rural employment, and household income (Devi et al., 2021). However, many agro-based enterprises continue to face challenges in adopting digital marketing strategies to attract and retain customers. Traditional sales approaches are increasingly ineffective, particularly among younger consumers who are more inclined toward online shopping. Moreover, consumer confidence in affiliate marketing an increasingly popular digital channel remains inconsistent.

While affiliate marketing has demonstrated effectiveness in industries such as fashion, technology, and services, its application in the agro-based sector remains underexplored. Existing studies predominantly focus on e-commerce adoption in general retail, leaving a significant gap in understanding how affiliate marketing can influence consumer behavior toward agro-based products in Malaysia. Addressing this gap is crucial, as affiliate marketing offers a cost-effective avenue for small and medium agro enterprises to expand their market reach.

This study investigates the role of four key determinants, product perception (PP), convenience (C), social influence (SI), and trustworthiness (T) in shaping consumer purchase intentions (CPI) for agro-based products via affiliate marketing. By focusing on an under-researched context, this research contributes to the literature on digital marketing in agriculture while offering practical insights for entrepreneurs seeking to strengthen consumer engagement through affiliate platforms.

Literature Review

Affiliate Marketing in the Digital Economy

Affiliate marketing has emerged as a cost-effective strategy that enables businesses to leverage third-party promoters to drive sales through commission-based arrangements (Duffy, 2005). While it has thrived in industries such as fashion and technology (Bandyopadhyay, 2021), its application in the agro-based sector remains limited. In Malaysia, agro-based enterprises often rely on conventional marketing, restricting their digital competitiveness (Devi et al., 2021).
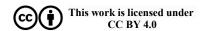
Consumer Purchase Intention

Purchase intention reflects consumers' likelihood to buy a product, influenced by attitudes, perceptions, and external cues (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Spears & Singh, 2004). In online contexts, purchase intentions are shaped by perceived value, trust, convenience, and social endorsements (Pavlou, 2003).

Product Perception

Product perception involves consumers' judgments of quality, value, and reliability. In agro-based markets, freshness, nutritional value, and authenticity strongly influence purchase behavior (Amin et al., 2021). Positive perceptions enhance affiliate credibility and purchase intentions (Liang et al., 2024).

Convenience

Convenience is a major driver of online shopping, defined as the reduction of time and effort in transactions (Berry et al., 2002). Studies show that convenience enhances online purchase

intentions (Chellaiah, 2022), making it particularly relevant for busy urban consumers purchasing agro-based products online.

Social Influence

Social influence refers to peer, family, and social network effects on decision-making (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Endorsements, reviews, and influencer marketing shape consumer trust and intentions (Liang et al., 2024). In Malaysia's social media-driven culture, social influence is critical for affiliate success.

Trustworthiness

Trust reduces perceived risk in online transactions (Gefen, 2000; McKnight et al., 2002). Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated that trust significantly predicts purchase intention in social commerce. For agro-based products, concerns over safety and authenticity make trustworthiness particularly decisive.

Research Gap

Although these factors have been widely examined in e-commerce, little empirical research has explored their role in affiliate marketing for agro-based products in Malaysia. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the combined effects of product perception, convenience, social influence, and trustworthiness on consumer purchase intentions.

Hypothesis Development

H1: Product perception positively influences consumers' purchase intentions for agro-based products via affiliate marketing.

H2: Convenience positively influences consumers' purchase intentions for agro-based products via affiliate marketing.

H3: Social influence positively influences consumers' purchase intentions for agro-based products via affiliate marketing.

H4: Trustworthiness positively influences consumers' purchase intentions for agro-based products via affiliate marketing.
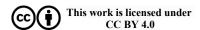
Methods

A quantitative research design was employed using a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed online. The target population included Malaysian consumers aged 18 and above in urban and suburban areas. Using Sekaran and Bougie's (2009) table and Daniel's (1999) formula, the required sample size was 384. Convenience sampling was applied.

Table 1: Determining sample size of a known population

Population	Sample Size
10,000	370
15,000	375
20.000	377
30,000	379
40,000	380
50,000	381
100.000	383
> 100,00	384

Source: Sekaran & Bougie 2009

The questionnaire comprised three sections: demographics (A), independent variables (B: PP, C, SI, T), and the dependent variable (C: CPI). Each construct was measured with five Likert-scale items. Data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Results and Discussion
Descriptive Analysis

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on demographic attributes

N= 384	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender				
Female	**279**	**72.7**	72.7	72.7
Male	105	27.3	27.3	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Age				
Below 20	16	4.2	4.2	4.2
20 – 29 years old	132	34.4	34.4	38.6
30 – 39 years old	**141**	**36.7**	36.7	75.3
40 – 49 years old	74	19.3	19.3	94.6
50 and above	21	5.5	5.5	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Educational Level				
Secondary	104	27.1	27.1	27.1
Diploma	93	24.2	24.2	51.3
Bachelor's Degree	**148**	**38.5**	38.5	89.8
Master's Degree or higher	39	10.2	10.2	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Occupation				
Student	56	14.6	14.6	14.6
Self-employed	55	14.3	14.3	28.9
Private Sector	**168**	**43.8**	43.8	72.7
Government	55	14.3	14.3	87
Unemployed	50	13.0	13.0	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Area				
Urban	**215**	**56.0**	56.0	56.0
Suburban	169	44.0	44.0	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Frequency of Purchase of Agro-based Products via Affiliate Marketing				
Yes	**298**	**77.6**	77.6	77.6
No	86	22.4	22.4	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Frequency of how often do consumers purchase Agro-based products online				
Very frequently	84	21.9	21.9	21.9
Occasionally	**130**	**33.9**	33.9	55.8
Rarely	114	29.7	29.7	85.5
Never	56	14.6	14.6	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Types of Agro-based Products Frequently Purchased on Online Platforms				
Produce (Vegetable, fruit)	33	8.6	8.6	8.6
Dairy Product (Cheese, milk)	44	11.5	11.5	20.1
Processed Food (Cereal, Flour, Chips, Paste)	**181**	**47.1**	47.1	67.2
Meat, Fish, Chicken	11	2.9	2.9	70.1
Fertilizer, Pesticide, Seeds	60	15.6	15.6	85.7
Never	55	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Respondents were mostly female (72.7%), aged 30–39 (36.7%), degree holders (38.5%), and urban residents (56%). Most had purchased agro-based products via affiliate marketing (77.6%), with processed food being most common (47.1%).

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: The Pearson Correlation Analysis

		PP	C	SI	T	CPI
PP	Pearson Correlation	1	0.759**	0.835**	0.645**	**0.719****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
	N	384	384	384	384	384
C	Pearson Correlation	0.759**	1	0.820**	0.840*	**0.856****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001		< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
	N	384	384	384	384	384
SI	Pearson Correlation	0.835**	0.820**	1	0.803**	**0.801****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001		< 0.001	< 0.001
	N	384	384	384	384	384
T	Pearson Correlation	0.645**	0.840*	0.803**	1	**0.865****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001		< 0.001
	N	384	384	384	384	384
CPI	Pearson Correlation	**0.719****	**0.856****	**0.801****	**0.865****	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	
	N	384	384	384	384	384

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed all four factors were positively correlated with purchase intentions: trustworthiness (r = 0.865), convenience (r = 0.856), social influence (r = 0.801), and product perception (r = 0.719), all at $p < 0.001$. These values indicate strong to very strong positive linear associations. The positive signs suggest that improvements in product perception, convenience, social influence, and trustworthiness are associated with higher levels of consumer purchase intention. Given that all p-values were below the 0.01 threshold, the null hypothesis (H$_0$: There is no significant relationship between the independent variables and purchase intention) was rejected.

These findings are consistent with prior research. Schober et al. (2018) emphasized that Pearson's r values approaching ±1 reflect stronger linear relationships, supporting the robustness of these results. Chellaiah (2022) similarly reported that greater convenience in e-commerce enhances customers' purchase intentions. Liang et al. (2024) confirmed that social influence and brand image significantly shape purchase intentions, aligning with the high correlation observed for social influence in this study (r = 0.801). Moreover, Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated that trust exerts a significant positive effect on purchase intention, with trust in sellers being especially influential a finding mirrored here, where trustworthiness recorded the strongest correlation (r = 0.865, $p < 0.001$).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Table 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Variables	EFA (Varimax Rotation)			Factor Loading	Communalities
	Eigen Value	% of variance	Cumulative % of variance		
Factor 1: Product Perception	14.204	71.020	71.020		
1. I think Agro-based products marketed through affiliates offer good value for money.				0.855	0.927
2. I feel confident about buying Agro-based products when recommended by affiliates.				0.841	0.913
3. I believe Agro-based products promoted through affiliate marketing are of high quality.				0.834	0.891
4. I think Agro-based products sold through affiliate marketing just as well as those sold in stores.				0.830	0.877
5. I find Agro-based products purchased through affiliate marketing to be reliable and trustworthy				0.829	0.919

Factor 2: Convenience	1.849	9.244	80.264		
1. I can purchase Agro-based products through affiliate marketing anytime and anywhere.				0.760	**0.934**
2. Buying Agro-based products through affiliate marketing is quick and easy.				0.743	0.914
3. I prefer purchase Agro-based products online because it saves time and effort.				0.735	0.887
Factor 3: Social Influence	0.971	3.955	84.219		
1. I am influenced by social media posts when deciding to buy Agro-based products.				0.750	0.886
2. I trust Agro-based products that are promoted by people I follow online.				0.687	0.902
3. I prefer Agro-based products that are popular and widely talked about online.				0.686	0.860
4. I am more likely to buy Agro-based products if my family or friends recommend them.				0.662	0.849
5. I feel more confident to buy Agro-based products when I see positive reviews from other buyers.				0.587	0.832
Factor 4: Trustworthiness	0.519	2.593	86.812		
1. I feel safe making online transactions if secure payment methods are provided.				0.839	0.848
2. I prefer to buy Agro-based products when secure payment methods are available.				0.834	0.855
3. I trust Agro-based products that have many positive reviews from other buyers.				0.775	0.884
4. I prefer to buy Agro-based products from affiliates who provide clear and honest information.				0.705	0.822
5. I feel confident buying Agro-based products if they are promoted by well-known or trusted people.				0.640	**0.771**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO): 0.957 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 0.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (0.957) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$) confirmed that the dataset was suitable for exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The high KMO value indicates strong intercorrelations among the variables (Naseer et al., 2019). Four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, accounting for 80.26% of the total variance. Most items loaded strongly onto their respective constructs, with factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.60, demonstrating acceptable construct validity (Hair et al., 2019). One item under the social influence construct recorded a slightly lower loading of 0.587; however, it was retained due to its theoretical importance and contribution to the reliability of the factor. Overall, the four-factor structure comprising product perception, convenience, social influence, and trustworthiness was empirically supported.

Discussion

Trustworthiness was the strongest predictor of purchase intention, consistent with prior findings on online commerce (Wang et al., 2022). Convenience ranked second, aligning with research on consumer demand for efficient online transactions (Chellaiah, 2022). Social influence was also significant, reflecting Malaysia's highly social media-driven culture (Liang et al., 2024). Product perception, though weaker, still played a role in shaping intentions, highlighting the importance of perceived quality and value.

Conclusion

This study identified product perception, convenience, social influence, and trustworthiness as key drivers of purchase intentions for agro-based products via affiliate marketing in Malaysia. Trustworthiness emerged as the most critical factor, followed by convenience, social influence, and product perception. These findings underscore the importance of building trust, enhancing convenience, and leveraging social influence in affiliate marketing strategies.

Theoretical Contributions

The study extends digital marketing literature by contextualizing affiliate marketing in the agro-based sector, an under-researched area.

Practical Implications

Agro-based entrepreneurs should:
Strengthen trust by offering secure payment systems and transparent product information.
Enhance convenience through user-friendly platforms and reliable logistics.
Leverage social media influencers and peer reviews to amplify marketing reach.
Improve product perception by highlighting quality, safety, and authenticity.

Limitations and Future Research

The study used convenience sampling, limiting generalizability. Future research could adopt probability sampling, explore rural populations, and integrate moderating variables such as consumer demographics or cultural values.

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