

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE ADVERTISING PLATFORMS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHERAS AREA IN KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of online advertising on consumer behaviour in the Cheras Area of Kuala Lumpur. It utilizes an empirical approach through a survey of 150 participants on whether they were exposed to online advertisements and on the impact of online advertising on their consumption behaviour in terms of their ethnic differentials and attitudes towards online advertising, their purchase intention, and their decision-making process. The findings suggest that online advertising has positively influenced consumer behaviour, as participants demonstrated a high level of awareness and acceptance of online advertising. Online advertising was, indeed, found to be influential in shaping purchasing habits, and the overall consumer behaviour. The findings of this research have significant implications for businesses that use online advertising as a marketing tool, as they provide insights into how online advertising can effectively influence consumer behaviour.

Keywords: *Online advertising, effectiveness, consumer behaviour, questionnaire survey, Cheras area*

INTRODUCTION

Online advertising is the practice of promoting products, services, or brands on the internet through channels like social media, search engines, websites, and mobile apps (Mishra & Mahalik, 2017). It allows advertisers to target specific audiences based on demographics, interests, and behaviours (Eze & Lee, 2012). With superior tracking and measurement capabilities, online advertising enables real-time analysis and optimization of advertising campaigns. Common online advertising forms include display ads, search engine marketing, social media advertising, native advertising, and video ads (Aydin, 2021). Each of these formats has its own unique advantages and can be used to achieve specific marketing objectives.

Online advertising enables direct communication with individual consumers by targeting specific audiences using online consumer data (Usman & Kumar, 2020; Nizam et al.,

2018). Compared to traditional methods like flyers, billboards, and traditional media ads, online advertising minimizes wastage and expenses (Jadhav & Khanna, 2016). However, it requires unique skills and strategies due to the distinct challenges and opportunities of the online environment (Anyasor & Umeadi, 2017). For the past three decades, online advertising has influenced across the globe, constituting a substantial share of shopping revenues that have benefited businesses and their employees as well as the government through increased tax collection.

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of online advertising on consumers by undertaking a case study of the extent to which consumers in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur (the Federal Capital of Malaysia), are influenced by online advertisements. The two key research questions are:

1. Why do people choose to do online shopping?
2. How have online platforms influenced consumers' behaviours?

Apart from them, other areas examined include variations in online shopping behaviours in terms of age, household income, educational backgrounds, and ethnicity. Malaysia's population comprises Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others, and we seek to compare their online shopping behaviours. Of the estimated total population of 33.5 million as of June 2023, Malays account for about 58% of the population, Chinese about 23%, Indians 10%, and the Others making of Eurasians and other minorities taking up the rest. Cheras was chosen for study as it is a vibrant and populous area known for its diverse demographic composition and thriving commercial activities. It is preferred over Bangsar, arguably a longer established urban area of Kuala Lumpur, because the latter is known for being a popular domicile of expats. The significance of this study is in generating insights on the effectiveness and implications of digital marketing strategies in a multiethnic Malaysian urban setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Shopping and Online advertising

Numerous studies have explored the effectiveness of online advertising as a marketing tool, which defines and is influenced by factors such as ad format, market targeting, and consumer behaviour. The internet has provided substantial support for designing various product marketing strategies, thus helping organisations predict consumers' buying behaviour (Widyastuti et al., 2020; Yoon & Kim, 2001). In today's digital age, the ease, speed, and convenience of online shopping have led to a significant preference for it among consumers. Online advertising plays a significant part in this e-commerce age, adding to increased consumer time spent surfing the internet.

The popularity of online shopping and the expansion of major online businesses indicate untapped market potential. Mishra (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of customer buying behaviour on Amazon and Alibaba, focusing on the behavioural differentials of different age groups. The quantitative study titled "Online Shopping Dynamics: Amazon Vs. Alibaba" found

that factors like attractiveness of online ads and brand ambassadors influenced 39.8% of customer buying behaviour, multimedia presentations attracted 13%, and other factors had a 7.5% influence. People attracted to advertisements made them remember brand names and unique product features. Brand ambassadors tended to get them to follow their idols and purchase brands endorsed by them. And multimedia presentations could pique their curiosity to want to learn more about a brand and possibly purchase it.

Kaur (2018) conducted a study examining the influence of different shopping orientations on consumers' intention to purchase apparel online. According to her findings, out of various shopping orientations, convenience orientation was found to have the most significant impact on consumers' online apparel purchase intention. As a result, Kaur recommended that online apparel retailers be prioritised by providing convenient ordering processes, minimising order processing time, and offering multiple payment options to attract and retain shoppers.

Baltas (2003) suggests that online shopping should give more emphasis to the convenience factor that allows people to shop from anywhere and at any time without leaving their homes or offices. It eliminates the challenges of traffic, parking, and crowds (Duarte et al., 2018). According to the Consumer Connect study conducted by Boss (2018), millennials, aged 25 to 40, perceived online shopping as particularly convenient compared to other age groups. They were more motivated by the convenience of free shipping, with 58% of millennials reporting this as an incentive compared to 50% of all consumers. Furthermore, 55% of millennials agreed that online shopping provided a higher level of convenience, particularly when it involved ordering online and picking up products from physical stores, compared to 52% of Gen Xers (43-58 years old) and 36% of baby boomers (59-77 years old) (Boss, 2018). The availability of online payment options also contributes to convenience by eliminating the inconvenience of cash payments and saving consumer's time and effort (Duarte et al., 2018). These findings indicate that consumers who recognise the advantages of convenience are more inclined to make online purchases.

Online shopping also provides a wider variety of products and services than a traditional brick-and-mortar store (Eze & Lee, 2012). People can shop for a vast selection of products from all around the world, without being limited to what is available at their local stores. Jadhav and Khanna's (2016) in-depth interviews reinforced this conclusion. They found that the participants expressed a desire to explore various options, and online shopping offered them the means to do so. More recent research (Kaur, 2018; Kotler et al., 2022), whether before or during the COVID-19 lockdown, continue to support the conclusion that making available a broad range of products on e-commerce platforms encourages consumers to shop and purchase online.

With more people turning to online shopping, competition among online retailers has increased (Obermiller et al., 2005). This has led to an increase in online advertising activity, as retailers compete for customers' attention and business. Bhat et al. (2020) have shown that internet advertisement has now become the most favoured approach to target consumers over the conventional approach of using traditional print and broadcast media. They also mentioned that online advertisements could be easily measured using analytics tools to determine how many

people had seen an online ad, clicked on it, and taken action after viewing the ad, as against the conventional advertisements in terms of what consumers would do after exposing to them.

Regarding the impact of online advertising on customer perception and the influence of different advertising media, Kumar et al. (2013) found that online advertising is considered an easier platform for obtaining information compared to traditional media advertising. It offers flexibility to retailers by allowing quick modifications on online ads, unlike traditional ads that require significant lead time (Gbadeyan, 2021). Along that line, Gbadeyan's research on millennials' attitudes towards online advertising highlights its effectiveness in providing easily understandable information about new products and specific details that aid purchasing decisions.

In examining factors influencing consumer attitudes towards online marketing, Chan et al. (2014) found strong associations between consumer attitudes and certain attributes of online ads. Attributes like positive image and useful information were particularly important. In Nigeria, Anyasor and Umeadi (2017) explored gender differences in attitudes towards online advertising. Male respondents valued information, entertainment, social interaction, and pricing, while females had their distinct preferences such as household and fashion products. The study recommended that incorporating female-oriented features in advertisements to improve perceptions among female audiences is important.

Usman and Kumar (2020) conducted a case study on online shopping in Nigeria, identifying several other influential variables including awareness, trust, security, accessibility, service quality, price perception, convenience, and compatibility. The two authors believed that these factors have contributed to Nigeria's online buying behaviours and overall GDP growth.

Although most of the research findings show that online advertising is an efficient platform for people to acquire product information, there are also research findings pointing to people having a negative attitude towards certain form of online advertising, including use of mobile apps, such as the research by Yaras et al (2017).

Impact of Covid 19 Pandemic

COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Brodeur et al., 2020). It was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and became a global pandemic, affecting tens of millions of people worldwide. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the global economy, with many businesses forced to close or operate under strict restrictions. Online buying could be strongly encouraged due to lockdowns imposed by governments which restricted population mobility (Liu, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on online advertising, both in the short term and potentially in the long term (Brodeur et al., 2020). There has been an increasing focus on e-commerce, changes in consumer behaviours, budget reallocation, as well as greater use of data and analysis on advertisement formats. Consequently, businesses are expected to intensify their focus on e-commerce and online advertising in engaging consumers (Usman & Kumar, 2020). This shift in behaviour may have long-term effects, as remote work and online education increase individuals' online presence, providing greater opportunities for online advertising.

The pandemic has indeed prompted businesses to adjust their advertising budgets, leading to a potential continuation of this trend. Online advertising, known for its cost-effectiveness compared to traditional methods, may experience increased investment as businesses seek to optimise their budgets (Mishra & Agrawal, 2017). To achieve more cost-effective advertising, businesses are likely to rely on data and analytics to target the right audience at the right time. Sensitivity to the current climate and the avoidance of tone-deaf messaging have become paramount, potentially resulting in changes to ad formats. This includes an increase in personalised and targeted ads while reducing generic mass-market advertising.

Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards online shopping and has made online advertising even more important for businesses to reach and engage with customers. Consumers now have prioritised essential items such as groceries and household supplies, thus increasing demand for these products online, while reducing demand for non-essential items such as clothing and accessories. Several benefits gained through online shopping such as convenience, efficiency, and cost savings have been clearly demonstrated (Liu, 2023; Bagherjeiran & Parekh, 2008; Brodeur et al., 2020).

While the world now has largely moved out of the COVID-19 pandemic, e-commerce has already become an important business model for commercial organisations with online advertising acting as possibly the most important channel for advertising their products and services. According to the International Market Analysis Research and Consulting Groups, the global online advertising market size reached US\$ 186.6 billion in 2021. The Group expected the market to reach US\$ 349.6 billion by 2027, exhibiting a growth rate of 10.9% from 2022 (IMARC Groups, 2022).

Goldfarb (2013) highlights that the primary feature of internet advertising is its ability to reduce the cost for advertisers to identify and target potential customers. Advertisers can collect information on a person's past actions and use this data to target their advertisement to people who may be interested in it. This targeted approach can significantly increase the effectiveness of the advertisement, leading to more sales for the company.

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the study of how individuals, groups, or organisations choose, use, and dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants (Bagherjeiran & Parekh, 2008). It involves understanding personal, psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence consumer decision-making. Personal factors cover a consumer's age, ethnicity, gender, income, education, personality, and lifestyle; psychological factors cover motivation, perception, learning, and attitudes; social factors cover family, friends, socio-economic classes; and cultural factors cover values/beliefs, aesthetic preference, etc. Marketing and situational factors can also influence consumer behavior. The former cover product features, pricing, promotion, and distribution whilst the latter consider time, place, and context of the purchase (Anyasor & Umeadi, 2017).

Measuring customer behaviour is a vital aspect of business for organisations to stay competitive, develop effective marketing strategies, and provide better customer experiences. The use of sensor technology, digital video, and computer speed has made it possible to measure and record complex calculations of human behaviour and psychological activities (Jadhav & Khanna, 2016). The more sophisticated means of measuring consumer behaviour is important for businesses and marketers to develop more effective marketing strategies to influence consumers' decision-making and behaviour (Thabit & Raewf, 2018). It can help businesses to identify the needs and wants of their target audience, develop products that meet those needs, and create marketing messages that resonate with them. Additionally, understanding consumer behaviour can help businesses to anticipate changes in demand and adapt to shifting market trends.

Kotler et al. (2022) define consumer buying behaviour as the process by which individuals, social groups, and organisations acquire and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants. The process involves evaluating and comparing different options before making a purchase decision (Maiyaki & Mokhtar, 2016). Several factors may impact their decision, such as price, brand, or comments. Once a decision is made, the product is used, and the consumer's attitude or behaviour after purchase will also affect other purchase intentions. Their reaction can be a clue for an organisation to determine whether their product or service has been successful or not. With the growth of the internet and the increasing shift towards online shopping and digital media consumption, online advertising has become a critical component of further understanding consumer behavior for developing marketing strategies.

Along that line, Bae and Zamrudi (2018) conducted a survey to examine how consumer behaviour is influenced by perceptions of content utility, entertainment, legitimacy, and non-irritating social media advertising. Their study has revealed that Indonesians have become more readily acceptable to perform social media retail purchases. At the community level, they have exhibited strong inclination in sharing their online marketing experience with friends and relatives. Meanwhile, Hwang et al. (2018) found that consumer satisfaction with the engagement process—including the completeness, relevance, flexibility, promptness, efficiency, and credibility of information—can lead to a higher likelihood of repurchasing products or services. With the rise of social media that has transformed advertising from a one-way monologue to a two-way conversation (Hudson et al., 2016), Sin et al. (2012) had investigated the factors influencing Malaysian young consumers' appetite for social media advertising and purchase and identified six factors--interactivity, information, trust, vividness, brand image, and word-of-mouth. The study found that word-of-mouth is the only factor that had an overall negative relationship with consumers' online purchase intentions. Hee and Yen (2018) found that social media has the strongest impact on consumer purchasing behaviour in Malaysia's food and beverage industry.

Research into other aspects of online advertising has also yielded positive correlation with consumer behaviour. Jadhav and Khanna (2016) noted that mobile marketing also has influenced purchasing behaviour regardless of customer interest, receptiveness, or product relevance. Search engines also play a crucial role in online marketing, with over half of all website visitors using them. Website quality facilitates access to information and influences consumer behaviour

(Hudson et al., 2016). However, search engines alone do not determine consumer purchasing intention; other factors like customer service, product distribution, promotion, and brand image also contribute significantly (Kaur, 2018). In addition, online advertising can also leverage social influence by showing endorsements or recommendations from other consumers, celebrities, or influencers, leading to social proof and increased purchase intentions. Further, based on a study by Mishra and Agrawal (2017), a comparative study on the buying behaviour of customers towards branded and non-branded apparel in Raipur City found that there was no direct effect of online and conventional advertising on consumer buying behaviour of branding. However, there was a significant indirect effect of both advertising mediums on consumer buying behaviour due to advertising characteristics and consumer attitudes. Yet another consideration is that while it is tempting to conclude online advertising has an impact on consumer behaviour, this may come about due to consumers' positive attitude towards websites (see Tripathy, 2022).

Arguably, certain people browsing the internet may up to a point ignore online advertising. Auschaitrakul (2017) notes that people have become blind to online advertising, ignoring it as they browse the web. To address this challenge, advertisers need to understand what consumers want from online advertising and tailor their ads accordingly. The length and content of the ads should be optimised to keep consumers engaged and avoid losing their interest or patience.

Consumer behaviour can be further divided into two categories, loyalty and alienation, depending on whether the product lives up to its advertised benefits. As Rodgers and Thorson, (2000) have discovered that the quality of advertising plays a critical role. They have also perceived that consumers view advertising typically and rationally by evaluating and comparing the advantages and disadvantages. Customers would first identify products or services that meet their needs and satisfy their pleasure search. However, they may become irrational in making decisions emotionally when they see promotion prices are not acceptable.

Based on the studies mentioned above, online advertising is gaining more attention in the market and become a crucial part of commerce today (Auschaitrakul, 2017). Hence, further studies about the effectiveness of online advertising on consumer behaviour should be conducted to understand more about the perception or respondents of consumers towards online advertisement. This study will aim to determine the effectiveness of online advertising on the consumer behaviour of people in the Cheras area of Kuala Lumpur. Despite the fact that many similar studies have been conducted as can be seen from the existing literature, this study aims to fill a gap using Malaysia's multi-ethnic background where a comparison of online shopping attitude and behaviours between different ethnic groups will be analysed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The chosen approach for this research study was qualitative in nature, employing interviews, observations, and document analysis. Qualitative research aims to gain an understanding of a situation or phenomenon by capturing its narrative rather than establishing cause and effect

relationships (Saunders et al, 2012). This triangular approach of interviews, observations, and document analysis led us to utilize structured and unstructured interviews in order to allow us to collect, analyse and interpret the findings more comprehensively. As Patton (1990) suggests, studies that rely on a single method are more susceptible to errors associated with that particular method, whereas studies that utilise multiple methods with diverse data types can cross-validate and enhance the validity of the findings.

Interview Survey

The survey process in this study involved several steps. Initially, it was based on the defined research questions, from which a survey was conducted using random sampling and interviews at selected sites. To gather information from the surveyed participants, a questionnaire survey form was designed with questions in alignment with the research objectives and questions outlined earlier. The survey focused on identifying a representative residential area in Kuala Lumpur to reflect residents from Malaysia's three major ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

Survey Sites

This study focused on a residential area in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, situated in the southeastern part of Malaysia's capital city (Figure 1). Cheras is a densely populated suburb known for its diverse culinary options, shopping malls, and recreational activities. It enjoys excellent connectivity to other parts of Kuala Lumpur through various highways and public transportation options, including the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) lines. With its blend of residential, commercial, and leisure opportunities, Cheras is a favoured location for Malaysians. Its choice for this study over the older Bangsar area is because the latter is known for its expat attraction.

During the survey period in February and March 2023, respondents for the survey questionnaire were randomly selected from different sites in the Cheras area, Kuala Lumpur. These sites included public places and residential areas where a mix of ethnic groups reside. The selection of Cheras as the survey location was facilitated by the fact that the main researcher lives in this area, making the survey site very familiar to him. While the survey adopted the availability approach or whoever was available at the time of survey, it also targeted respondents according to their ethnicity. The study ended up with 60% Malay respondents, 25% Chinese, and 15% Indians, a breakdown roughly capturing the ethnic distribution in West Malaysia.

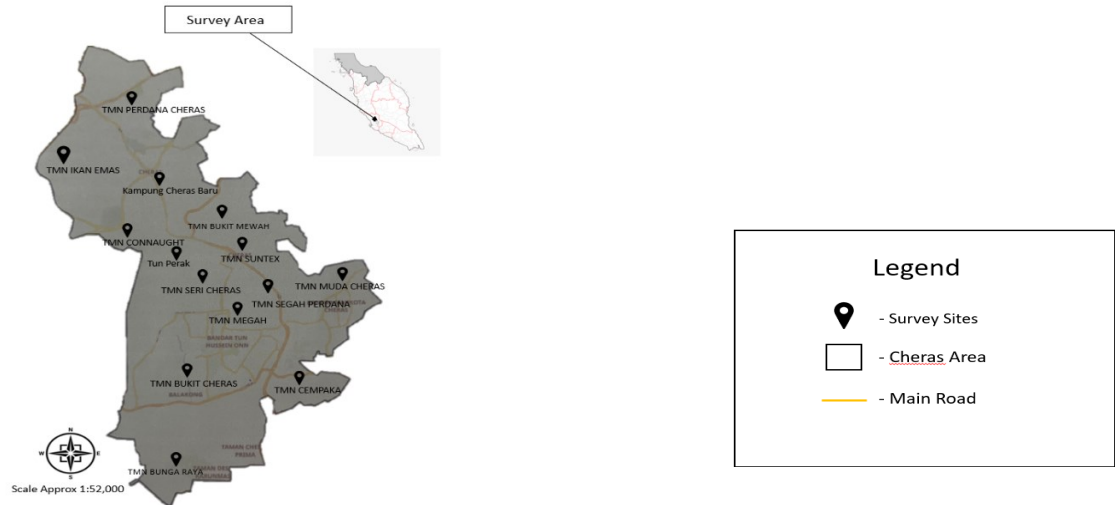


Figure 1: Survey Area Cheras, Kuala Lumpur

Note: Adapted from Wikipedia contributors' website (Downloaded December 9, 2022). Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

Source: Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheras,_Kuala_Lumpur

Data Processing

A total of 150 individuals in the Cheras area participated in an open-ended, semi-structured survey. Categorising the responses to open-ended questions is a crucial step in the research. It involves grouping the answers based on their similarities. Open-ended questions allow respondents to provide unrestricted responses without being confined to predefined choices. However, categorising these open-ended answers can be a challenging task that demands careful examination of the response content and the context in which they were given. The two open-ended questions used in the questionnaire survey are:

1. Are you usually influenced by the advertisement when you surf the internet?

- Not at all
- Yes, sometimes
- Most Often

Why? Explain your choice

2. When I go online shopping, I am more influenced by XX: Give two reasons why?

From the responses given to each question, these open-ended answers recorded in the survey form can be categorised manually, though it is time-consuming and labour-intensive. By doing so, we

have manually categorised the individual answers into different groupings, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Whether Influenced by Advertisement When Surfing Internet

Free answers	Categorised as
Annoying	No interest
No interest on advertisement	
No interest on ads product	
Not familiar with internet	Lack Familiarity
Not familiar with platform	
Not familiar with smart phone	
Interesting ads performances	Attracted by advertisement
Interesting product performances	
Feeling curious on the product itself	Curious about product/brand
Want to try the product brand	
Want to find out the product function	
Attracted by need for product	Shopping need
Attracted by product's cheaper prices	
Looking for cheaper products advertised online	
Product in need matching well promotion prices	
Worried one could be cheated	Worried about getting scammed
Distrust over advertised information	
Internet virus infection	Others
Internet virus	
Leaking on personal information, and many others	

Source : Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023

The above table has listed out the categorised groupings from the open-ended answers. Those grouping shown on the right column have been organised from freely given verbal answers from interviewees, as indicated on the left column, on whether they were influenced by advertisement when surfing the internet. The first Groups, for example, includes “Annoying”, “No interest on advertisement” and “No interest on ads product” could all be grouped under “No interest”. Working along with this logic, a total of seven categories have been classified. The last category grouped under “Others” covers those uncommon and rarely seen answers.

From the interview survey, another categorised grouping is needed from “Reasons why influenced by online/TV advertisement”. Using the same logical interpretation mentioned above, it is able to obtain seven categories of grouping as given in Table 2 on next page.

Table 2: Reasons Influenced by Online/TV Advertisement

Free Answers	Categorised as
Use internet more often	Mobile usage is more readily available
Smart phone	
Using laptop	
No smartphone/not familiar	TV commercial is more reliable
Watching TV more often	
TV information is more reliable	
Attracted by vouchers	Attracted by promotion
Promotion exercise by companies	
Cheaper prices	
Brand ambassador	Branding
Brand image	
Want to skip the ads	Others
Avoid ads as they could be scams	
More product choices online	

Source : Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

General Features of the 150 Respondents Surveyed

The discussion begins with background information and the general behaviour of the surveyed individuals concerning internet use, excluding working time. Table 3 below illustrates the daily time spent on the internet based on different age groups. Younger age groups tend to spend more time compared to older groups. The age group of 26-35 years old has the highest proportion of 100%, spending 2 hours to more than 3 hours daily. This is followed by the 18-25-year group (97.06%), the 36-45-year group (77.77%), and the 46-55-year group (16.67%). Individuals over 55 years old typically spend less than 2 hours per day on the internet.

Table 3: Time Spent on Internet Daily by Age Groups

Age Groups (years)	≤1 hour (%)	1 - 2 hours (%)	2 - 3 hours (%)	>3 hours (%)	Average (%)	Number of Respondents
18-25	0	2.94	52.94	44.12	22.67	34
26-35	0	0	72.09	27.91	28.67	43
36-45	0	22.22	69.44	8.33	24.00	36
46-55	4.17	79.17	16.67	0	16.00	24
>55	69.23	30.77	0	0	8.66	13
Total	6.67	21.33	52.00	20.00	100	150

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023

Similarly, the survey found that the frequency of online purchase by age groups was highest among the younger age groups with higher frequency of online purchase. Age group 18 –

25 years old had the highest proportion (94.12%) on frequency of online purchase, followed by age groups 26 – 35 years old (86.05%), 36 – 45 years old (80.55%), 46 – 55 years old (66.67%) and 56 years old and above (15.38%). Table 4 below shows the website platforms searched by the different age groups sear. Facebook is found to be the most popular platform for surfing which accounts for 32.67%, of all platforms, followed by Instagram, 30.67%, and YouTube 25.33%.

Table 4: Website Platform Searching by Age Groups

Age Groups (years)	YouTube (%)	Facebook (%)	Twitter (%)	Instagram (%)	Others (%)	Total (%)	Number of Respondents
18-25	5.88	23.53	5.88	61.77	2.94	22.67	34
26-35	20.93	32.56	6.98	37.21	2.33	28.67	43
36-45	38.89	36.11	0	16.67	8.33	24.00	36
46-55	33.33	41.67	0	8.33	16.67	16.00	24
> 55	38.46	30.77	0	7.69	23.08	8.66	13
Total	25.33	32.67	3.33	30.67	8.00	100.00	150

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023.

Among the products and other objects that interviewees searched on websites, the most frequently searched items were entertainment inclusive of music, books, sports, movies, videos, and information items such as job opportunities, dictionaries, education, statistical data etc

Table 5 shows that entertainment items took up almost two-thirds of all searches and almost one in five looked for information products. The age group 26 – 35 years old was most frequent users in looking for entertainment products (88.67%).

Table 5: Products Usually Searched by Different Age Groups

Age Groups (Years)	Entertainment items (%)	Information items (%)	Others (%)	Total (%)	Number of respondents
18-25	85.29	11.76	2.94	22.67	34
26-35	88.37	4.65	6.98	28.67	43
36-45	52.78	19.44	27.78	24.00	36
46-55	25.00	37.50	37.50	16.00	24
> 55	23.08	38.46	38.46	8.66	13
Total	63.33	18.00	18.67	100.00	150

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023

Our survey has also found that those households having the lowest income (RM 2000 and below¹) were most interested in looking for entertainment products (100%). The highest income group earning over RM 8000 per month were most enthusiastic in searching for information products (67%) (Table 6).

Table 6: Household Income against Products Usually Searched

Household Income (RM)	Products Usually Searched			Total (%)	Number of respondents
	Entertainment items (%)	Information items (%)	Others (%)		
≤2000	100	0	0	2.67	4
2001- 3500	73.53	11.76	13.89	22.67	34
3501- 5000	62.50	16.07	21.43	37.33	56
5001- 6500	63.16	18.42	18.42	25.33	38
6501- 8000	40.00	33.33	26.67	10.00	15
> 8000	33.33	66.67	0	2.00	3
Total	63.33	18.00	18.67	100.00	150

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023

Comparison of Online shopping Behaviours Among Ethnic Groups

Different ethnic groups were hypothesised to have varying online shopping behaviours due to cultural diversity and income differentials. Most of the respondents' household income of all three ethnic groups were in the range from RM 3501 to 5000 (Table 7). Out of a total of 56 respondents (37.33%) from this income range, 40 of them were Malays, 11 Chinese, and five Indians. Chinese and Indians were more common among the lowest income groups, though the number was quite small. Generally speaking, Malay households surveyed in this Cheras area earned more than other ethnic groups; it is assumed that more highly paid Malay government servants are located there whereas ethnic Chinese and Indians were largely those of the working class.

Table 7: Ethnic Groups Against Household Incomes

Household Income (Rm)	Ethnic Groups			Total (%)	Number of Respondents
	Malays (%)	Chinese (%)	Indians (%)		
≤ 2000	0	50.00	50.00	2.67	4
2001- 3500	55.88	35.29	5.88	22.67	34
3501- 5000	71.43	19.64	8.93	37.33	56
5001- 6500	60.53	60.53	13.16	25.33	38
6501- 8000	66.67	13.33	20.00	10.00	15
> 8000	66.67	33.33	0	2.00	3
Total	62.67	25.33	12.00	100.00	150

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023.

With regards to variations on online purchases by ethnic groups, our survey discovered that ethnic Indians had a higher frequency towards online purchases than the Chinese and Malays, with Indians at 88.89%, Malays at 75.54%, and Chinese at 73.69%. Overall, 59.33% of all the respondents chose to purchase online sometimes, 17.33% purchased online always, and 23.33% did not purchase online at all.

Our survey has demonstrated that about one in four of all three ethnic groups did not purchase online at all. The two key reasons given by the respondents as to why they did not purchase online was “not interested” or “not familiar with the method”. Close to 45% among them would say they had no mobile phones or WIFI and other reasons.

Factors Influencing Online Shopping Behaviours

Table 8 below shows the distribution of interviewees Influenced by advertisements when surfing the internet. A total of 53 respondents (35.3%) mentioned that there were not influenced by advertisements. The other 97 respondents agreed that there were influenced by the advertisement when surfing the internet.

Table 8: Distribution of Interviewees Influenced by Advertisement when Surfing Internet

Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Not at all	53	35.3
Yes, sometimes	82	54.7
Most Often	15	10.0
Total	150	100.0

Source : Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023.

Table 9 recorded the reasons why the interviewees were not influenced by online advertisements with the main reason being they had no interest. This was followed by their worry that advertisements could be scams. Next is lack of familiarity (11.3%) with most of them over 55 years old (give the percentage), while 5.7% mentioned other reasons such as virus attacks of different origins.

Table 9: Reasons Interviewees not Influenced by Online advertisements

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No interest	24	45.3
Lacking familiarity	6	11.3
Worried they get scammed	20	37.7
Others	3	5.7
Total	53	100

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023.

As to those who claimed they were affected by advertisements, there were 97 respondents out of 150 (or 65%) of them. The reasons cited were they were attracted by advertisements, curious about products, and they had the shopping need (Table 10).

Table 10: Reasons Interviewees Influenced by Online advertisements

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Attracted by advertisement	38	39.2
Curious about product	32	33.0
Shopping need	27	27.8
Total	97	100.0

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023

Influenced by TV or Website Advertisements

Lastly, our interest is whether interviewees were more influenced by advertisements from TV or website. Our survey shows that there were 37 (24.67%) interviewees who agreed they were influenced more by TV but a much higher proportion of 113 interviewees (75.33%) claimed they were influenced by website advertisements. The main reasons given by those who preferred TV advertisements was that the TV commercials were reliable information about the products with lower chance of being scams, followed by brand image or brand ambassador that would appear on the screen.

For website advertisement, most of the interviewees said they were influenced more by website advertisements due to mobile usage being more available (62.8%). The interviewees argued that the use of mobile phones, laptops, or iPads would increase their chances in seeing website advertisements. One other reason cited was the promotion exercise provided by online advertisers that had attracted them. Promotion exercise accounting for about one-third of the 113 participants being influenced by website commercials could occur in several ways such as free product delivery, cash back, discount, and others (Table 11).

Table 11: Reasons for Website Advertisement Influence

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mobile usage is more available	71	62.8
Attracted by promotions	37	32.7
Branding impact	5	4.4
Total	113	100.0

Source: Interview Survey, Cheras, Feb-Mar 2023.

Research Findings and Analysis

The study has responded to the two key research questions, namely, why people choose to do online shopping, and how online platforms have influenced consumers' behaviours. Our survey shows a large proportion of our respondents were attracted to and affected by online advertising than traditional advertising. Additionally, its aims to evaluate the effectiveness of online advertising in terms of impact on consumer response and purchase decision-making in Malaysia have yielded certain useful findings which are indicated below:

1. Internet usage is most popular among youngsters 26-35 years old who spent 2 hours to more than three hours daily on surfing and least popular among those aged over 55 who spent less than one hour daily. Those aged 18-25 years tended to be the most active in performing online purchase while those above 55 were hardly active (15% only).
2. Facebook was the most popular website platform among all users (one in three) while Instagram was the most frequently used by the youngest age group of 18-25 years. Entertainment items were the most targeted in product searching online and this was the most common with the lower income groups.
3. Online purchases were performed by all age groups with the highest proportion coming from those earning a household income of RM 6501-8000 monthly.
4. Among the 150 surveyed, 97 or 65% of them were attracted by online commercials. They were attracted by advertisements, out of curiosity and shopping need. The reasons given for why they were attracted by website advertisements were that they had mobile phone with WIFI connection, were attracted by promotion offers, and were drawn to product branding.

CONCLUSION

In summary, online shopping together with online advertising had a larger influence on consumer behaviours, and appear to continue to be so in future. Online shopping saves money for consumers and is a lot more convenient than traditional brick-and-mortar shopping. E-marketers are advised to place ads that appear interesting and attractive to create curiosity and draw consumer's attention. Even aimless online browsing by consumers may lead to online impulse buying. E-marketers should thus develop ads that are easy to browse and access product/brand information to target websites.

The findings from our survey suggest that online advertising has positively influenced consumer behaviour, as participants demonstrated a high level of awareness and acceptance towards online advertising. Moreover, online advertising was found to be influential in shaping purchase intentions, decision-making, and the overall consumer behaviour of participants. The findings of this research have significant implications for businesses that use online advertising as a marketing tool, as it provides insights into how online advertising can effectively influence consumer behaviour.

Limitations & Recommendations

Overall, the present study has to a good extent provided insights into online consumer behaviour, which has profound implications for online retailers promoting business through online ads.

However, it can be strengthened. To begin with, the survey approach adopted in this study was based on availability selection on whoever happened to appear in sites around the Cheras area of Kuala Lumpur during the period of survey in February and March 2023. Some respondents also had rushed their answers, especially in addressing open-ended questions. This could have cut down the accuracy of their responses. Given these constraints, future surveys of this nature should be

organised with more time to spend with the respondents and clearer explanation given to them. This will help to ensure more accurate answers.

Moreover, the current study was conducted only in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur. Future studies examining other areas of Kuala Lumpur as well as outside of it especially in the more rural areas of Malaysia will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, data on the effectiveness of online advertising is much needed to improve the understanding of online consumers' perception of internet advertising.

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Notes:

¹ Ringgit Malaysia (Rm). As of early June 2023, one US\$ is equivalent to 4.5 Ringgit Malaysia.