

## **The Impact of Situational Factor on Social Selling Intention in e-Marketing with the Mediating Effect of Self-Efficacy**

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### **Abstract**

Businesses are influenced by external factors uninterruptedly which may in turn force their business transformation strategies upon the situations faced. The adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic have made social media an essential business tool with the increasing number of social media users. Consumers are now more informed, connected, and empowered with easier access to social media platforms. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of situational factors (i.e., economic condition, transformation of technology, and customer engagement in social media) that influence the social selling behaviour of social sellers in the Malaysian context. Despite the high level of social selling activities in Malaysia, no conclusive evidence has shown the relationship between situational factors, self-efficacy, and social selling intention. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps with the application of Theory of Planned Behaviour to capture the behavioural intention of social sellers toward social selling activities. A total of 504 sets of questionnaires were collected and used for analysis using the partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. The findings demonstrated that the transformation of technology and customer engagement in social media were significantly related to social selling intentions. Interestingly, it was found that self-efficacy acted as the mediator in the relationship between economic condition and customer engagement in social media on social selling intention. Social selling intention was also found to affect social selling performance. The present study enhances the body of knowledge about the social selling intentions among Malaysians to serve as a resource for future researchers.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, Situational Factors, Social Commerce, Social Selling Intention, Structural Equation Modelling

### **Introduction**

The transformation of customers' purchasing behaviour has been witnessed by all businesses with the current trend of digitalisation. Customers are relying less on traditional selling initiatives as information can be obtained through online presence anytime and anywhere (Andersen, Archacki, De Bellefonds, & Ratajczak, 2017; Sangwan, Sharma, & Sharma, 2022). However, salespersons today are struggling to engage their audiences sufficiently before the need's definition due to less

interaction in between, which is not only simple for offerings but also value-based sales and solutions delivering (Terho, Eggert, Ulaga, Haas, & Böhm, 2017). Empowered buyers rely more and more on social media and digital resources (Wiese, 2017). These buyers are affected by the social content for their purchasing decisions (Minsky & Quesenberry, 2016). These have resulted in situational pressure for businesses to transform into online businesses.

With an increasing number of individual engagements on social media, social media has become a significant tool for all businesses (Knight, Haddoud, & Megicks, 2021). Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic has opened opportunities for all industries to engage in social commerce to drive more audiences for online visits and boost sales (Mason, Narcum, & Mason, 2021). Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the importance of social media as a social commerce platform from the perspectives of businesses and individual retailers (Rydén, Ringberg, & Wilke, 2015; Mason et al., 2021). The influence of social media on overall online retail sales, especially as referral traffic and social-driven retail sales, are increasing rapidly.

Self-efficacy can influence individuals' choices of activities when it comes to behaving. The perception of social selling would be different between experienced and inexperienced social sellers due to their ability to employ social media as a business tool (Park, Sung, & Im, 2017). Self-efficacy explains the confidence level of individuals with their knowledge and ability to sell on social media. Individuals who posed with a high level of self-efficacy would have an enormous impact on sales performances (Caliendo, Kritikos, Rodriguez, & Stier, 2023).

Furthermore, there has been no conclusive evidence on the relationship between customer engagement in social media, self-efficacy and social selling intention (Adetola & Ifeanyichukwu, 2016). Moreover, no prior study has explored the correlation between the transformation of technology, self-efficacy and social selling intention (Vasumathi & Joe Arun, 2021). Despite the high engagement rate of social selling in Malaysia, research into the perceptions of social selling intention is still scarce (Ali, Mukhtar, & Mohamed, 2020). This study seeks to fill these gaps by examining how situational factors affect social selling intention in Malaysia. The Theory of Planned Behavior served as the underpinning theory and self-efficacy was included as the mediator to evaluate the relationship between the antecedents' variables and social selling intention.

## Literature Review

This section explores hypotheses based on an extensive literature review on the relationship between situational factors and sellers' social selling behavior, with the mediating factor of self-efficacy. The conceptual framework is grounded in Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

### *Social Commerce*

Social commerce refers to online businesses that use social media to facilitate online purchases and sales. Social commerce enables communication between consumers and sellers on the Internet (Gibreel, AlOtaibi, & Altmann, 2018) and ensures that online marketers can reach their specific target market (Duffett, 2015). Social commerce enables product information sharing so that customers can learn about a product or service from other social media users. Besides that, retailers could also source the strategic information of competitors from social media. Social media users are both producers of user-generated content and consumers. Social media space has easy access

to the contents, in which the exchange of information, recommendations, reviews, and feedback could turn into word-of-mouth (Tan & Lee, 2019). Apparently, social commerce appears to be an excellent way for the development of customer relationships. Consensus has been found in current literature on the importance of conducting business using social media platforms (Bill, Feurer, & Klarmann, 2020; Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). These phenomena are because online users demonstrate proficiency in social technology (Vermeer, Araujo, Bernitter, & van Noort, 2019).

### *Social Selling Performance*

Social selling performance is affected by the prosocial participation of customers during the sales process (Shannahan, Bush, Shannahan, & Moncrief, 2017). Terho, Giovannetti, and Cardinali (2022) proposed a chain of mediated performance effects to further define the performance (Barney-McNamara, Peltier, Chennamaneni, & Niedermeier, 2020). These performances include personal performance, relational performance, and outcome performance (Bowen, Lai-Bennejean, & Rangarajan, 2021). Social media mobile applications have made businesses ease the obstacle of limited accessibility by enabling wireless communication through technologies like the 5th Generation (5G) (Chong, Chong, Ooi, & Lin, 2011). Social media would assist a marketer in building a recognisable "personal brand" (Barney-McNamara et al., 2020). Furthermore, social selling drives customer acquisition and retention performance (Terho et al., 2022). Overall, social media use would enhance implementor performances through increased adaptive selling.

### *Social Selling Intention*

Recent studies in psychology have shown that understanding the causes of human behaviour involves a combination of factors such as learned behaviours, a complex mixture of genetics, potentially conflicting motivations, and numerous other variables. The intention of humans tends to form before the action is taken (Anscombe, 1976). Intention refers to a state of mind, experience, leading attention and actions toward a specific goal or pathway to achievement (Albert, 2020). It is a representative commitment toward certain behaviours in the present or the future (Anscombe, 1976). However, intention varies from person to person and time, which indicates that it is all dependent on the intentions of an individual, whether they want to do or not to perform a certain behaviour (Thompson, 2009). Selling intention leads to activities related to sales, such as social selling (Ho & Cheng, 2020) and sales prospecting (Bowen et al., 2021). Many scholars have argued that a successful individual business or organisation of a new entity requires intentionality (Brush, Manolova, & Edelman, 2008). The intentions are a valuable resource in entrepreneurs' minds (Brush et al., 2008). In addition, the desire for self-realisation (Brush et al., 2008), and the time-spend (Renko, Kroeck, & Bullough, 2011) are needed for selling intention. Besides, the difference between current reality and an individual's future vision could drive the need for personal development such that the larger the gap toward the objective, the more intense it is to achieve it (Sanda, 2020). Individuals with high-selling intentions would pursue their idea and turn it into a working venture (Reynolds, 2007).

### *Situational Factors*

Situationism refers to a psychological perspective on personality, which suggests that an individual's behaviour is primarily shaped by external and situational factors rather than their

internal traits or motivation in engaging in the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It encourages individual involvement by offering monetary incentives (Steg, Bolderdijk, Keizer, & Perlaviciute, 2014). Situational factors are specific situations that involve individual characteristics, individual knowledge, experiences and behavioural context (Barr, 2007). Zia, Bashir, Mangi, and Shamsi (2022) also added that situations involve the location, environment, and culture in which a person conducts their work and would affect the motivation to engage in new technology and businesses (Martin, Mansour, & Malmberg, 2019). Situational factors must be fully taken into account to fully understand the motivation of individuals on online platforms (Gazal, Montague, & Wiedenbeck, 2019). This study reveals different situational factors influencing the behavioural intention of social sellers which comprise economic conditions, transformation of technology and customer engagement.

Economic condition refers to the financial health level of an individual or an organisation (Guzi & Mikula, 2021), stability, satisfaction, and the objective number of financial resources they possess (Budescu & Taylor, 2013). As stated, household income has been found to have greater impacts on personal economic condition, which is influenced by income level, education level, gender, age, marital status, housing tenure, employment status, number of financial dependents and financial stressors (de Miquel, Domènech-Abella, Felez-Nobrega, Cristóbal-Narváez, Mortier, Vilagut, Alonso, Olaya, & Haro, 2022). Individuals with lower household incomes tend to start a new business journey. Consequently, individuals or organisations would be more likely to find more strategies to increase their economic condition, to overcome or enhance the current condition.

Transformation is the process of perceptions changing holistically upon an activity (Lolic, Stefanovic, Dionisio, Dakic, & Havzi, 2022). For this study, the transformation of technology is described as the advancement of a digital platform (Simsek, Öner, Kunday, & Arkali Olcay, 2021). Technology development assists businesses in expanding their market (Gouda, 2022). However, Abdelfattah, Al Halbusi, and Al-Brwani (2022) stated that engagement in e-business is risky but has a substantial impact on market expansion. With the evolution of technology, marketing can work effectively at a low cost (Berto, Imam, Ninditya, Rachma, & Faras, 2022). Leveraging the capabilities of technology would assist in overcoming resource constraints (Fraccastoro, Gabrielsson, & Chetty, 2021).

The term "engagement" describes how individuals employ their "preferred self" and simultaneously express themselves in a task behaviour that fosters a connection between one another to work with active personal presence in full role performance (Khan, 1990). Customer engagement is the possession of predictive power on business performances and the outcome of consumers (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016). Customer engagement occurs when satisfying relationships are formed in between based on trust, emotional bonding, and commitment (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Opinions can be obtained through social media platforms with the increasing number of customer engagements (Marie-Isabelle, Dominik, & Wafa, 2022). Customer engagement has been divided into three stages: relationship formation, expression, and performance contribution (de Oliveira Santini, Ladeira, Pinto, Herter, Sampaio, & Babin, 2020). Aligned with the outcome performance of social media utilisation, businesses today have switched to digital platforms for more competitive advantages (Paruthi & Kaur, 2017).

### *Self-Efficacy (mediator)*

Self-efficacy is determined by the motivation level of an individual, reflecting the efforts and perseverance toward their objective (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy reveals how an individual's behaviour is shaped by circumstances, individual involvement in activities and intrapersonal interaction (Bandura, 2012). Expectations for certain behavioural outcomes and the ability to perform certain behaviours could be affected by self-efficacy (Adebusuyi, Adebusuyi, & Kolade, 2021). Self-efficacy includes aspects such as experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback (Eastman & Marzillier, 1984). Individuals with higher self-efficacy are more competitive and educated than individuals with lower self-efficacy. In other words, individuals who believe in their ability to accomplish are most likely to achieve their objectives. These relationships can be explained by two theoretical hypotheses. Firstly, individuals who perceive themselves as unable to complete tasks are likely to have a reduced chance of attaining higher education qualifications. Secondly, attaining a university degree boosts an individual's perception of their capabilities due to the prestige associated with the achievement and the tangible skills gained through the education. Therefore, self-efficacy is explained by the knowledge in the form of attitude toward a certain behaviour among individuals in the entrepreneurship study (Greeni & Khanh, 2022).

### *Theory of Planned Behaviour*

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) aims to predict human intentions and behaviour in different contexts (Ajzen, 1985). TPB stated that the degree of endeavour that an individual intends to execute that behaviour is predicted by their intention (Entrialgo & Iglesias, 2016), as people tend to have prior planning and intention on whether an activity should be executed (Ajzen, 2002). Furthermore, this construct also stated the three elements that impact the intention: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude is how an individual evaluates a certain conduct they engage in which involves the consideration of consequences while executing that behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Furthermore, the attitude of an individual while facing different situations such as the replacement of digital platforms in society, lack of financial resources, and the current trends of doing business, are significant for behavioural intention. The subjective norm is an indication of the influence of social elements in which an individual's normative beliefs are influenced by the external social pressure to conform to a specific behaviour. This construct was introduced for certain situations where non-motivational factors, such as the lack of financial resources, skills and knowledge, or cooperation from others, could turn the perceived behavioural control into an intention if the behaviour was to start a business (Muhammet & Semira, 2016). Intentions have regularly emerged as a distinctive predictor of self-efficacy (Quaye, Mokgethi, & Ameyibor, 2021). TPB is the fundamental theory used to clarify the influence of economic conditions, transformation of technology, and customer engagement in social media on social selling intention in the Malaysian context.

### *Hypotheses Development*

Revathy and Pirchandi (2020) have confirmed that economic conditions contribute to an individual's economic condition on technology usage. Halizah (2022) has stated that individuals would look for new opportunities when having a lack of financial resources. Individuals who are

affected by the Covid-19 pandemic would tend to start a new business journey (Saleh, 2021). These findings have been supported by Jung, Shim, Jin, and Khang (2016), who examined attitudes and behavioural intentions toward social media advertising. Similarly, Abubakar and Hartini (2013) noted that behavioural intention on technology usage largely depends on economic condition of an individual. In fact, these individuals often turn to social media selling to stabilise financial condition.

Akpan and Ibidunni (2021) have shown the significance of leveraging technologies to overcome resource limitations. Any business that adopts e-business would possess better access to marketing performance (Wagner, Fillis, & Johansson, 2003). In addition, Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, and Goodman (2017) concluded that effective customer communication is crucial for businesses. Research on technology transformation has shown significant implications on the behavioural intention of individuals or businesses to adopt new technologies (Engotoit, Kituyi, & Moya, 2016; Ibrahim, 2018). Akar and Mardikyan (2014) have stated that technological advancement would affect behavioural intention toward social media adoption.

With the increasing number of social media users, social media platforms act as a means for businesses to communicate with their customers (Sajane & Gaikwad, 2022). Customer engagement refers to the intensity and frequency of participation (van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, & Verhoef, 2010). By having more audiences on social media, social sellers are more likely to focus on social media platforms as a significant marketing tool (Sashi, 2012; Abdullah & Siraj, 2018). The findings concluded that customer engagement in social media provided necessary inputs such as resources from opinions and the possibility to reach targeted customers. Correspondingly, the researcher is examining these areas:

H1: Economic condition is positively related to social selling intention.

H2: Transformation of technology is positively related to social selling intention.

H3: Customer engagement in social media is positively related to social selling intention.

Recent qualitative research has suggested that behavioural intention to adopt social media as a marketing tool would assist a salesperson in building a consistent and recognisable “personal brand” (Barney-McNamara et al., 2020) or “thought leadership” (Magno & Cassia, 2019). Arguably, if a salesperson can establish thought leadership and develop a reputation as a trustworthy advisor, this should also facilitate other aspects of their performance. Aligned with the results of relational performance, it was argued that social selling drove retention performance and customer acquisition (Nijssen, Guenzi, & Van der Borgh, 2017). These findings were supported by Jelinek, Ahearne, Mathieu, and Schillewaert (2014), who demonstrated that high-performing salespeople reported an intention to implement the technology to improve their selling performance. The concept was further supported by Itani et al. (2017), who stated that social media use enhanced sales performance through increased adaptive selling and competitive intelligence gathering. Based on the above discussion, the researcher has proposed the following proposition:

H4: Social selling intention is positively related to social selling performance.

Furthermore, Neneh (2020) stated that the motivation of individuals would be affected by self-efficacy while engaging in business activities. It also affects the proactivity and creativity of entrepreneurial intention (Kumar & Shukla, 2019). In addition, Dybowski, Sehner, and Harendza, (2017) also found that situational factors would affect the self-efficacy of an individual toward the intention of a certain behaviour. These findings have been supported by Al-Qadasi, Zhang, Al-Awlaqi, Alshebami, and Aamer (2023), who stated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates between situational factors and behavioural intention. Economic literacy has been shown to have a significant effect on behavioural intention when combined with self-efficacy (Rastiti, Widjaja, & Handayati, 2021). This is demonstrated by the results of calculating the intentions of individuals with low and high economic literacy values combined with self-efficacy values. Individuals will possess more confidence in their capacity to engage in new ventures if these individuals have a strong foundation in economics (Bharanti, Idrus, Zain, & Solimun 2012). Van der Westhuizen and Goyayi (2020) have emphasised the catalytic influences of technology that influences entrepreneur's self-efficacy in terms of opportunity-identification self-efficacy, relationship self-efficacy, management self-efficacy and tolerances self-efficacy towards a business start-up (Kasˇperova, Kitching, & Blackburn, 2018). In the entrepreneurial study, Van der Westhuizen and Goyayi (2020) also found that technology transformation would affect self-efficacy for online business start-ups in developing countries. Moreover, customers are increasingly considering social media content (Ancillai, Terho, Cardinali, & Pascucci, 2019) and have shown an effect on social media communication self-efficacy in terms of the experience, role clarity, commitment, and training of social sellers (Pekkala & Van Zoonen, 2021). Prabhu, McGuire, Drost, and Kwong, (2012) also explored the relationship of self-efficacy between situational factors and entrepreneurial intention. Although situational factors would lead to behavioural intention, the intention of an individual toward a certain behaviour would be affected by self-efficacy as it involves an individual's ability toward the behaviour. Following that, the following hypotheses have been outlined:

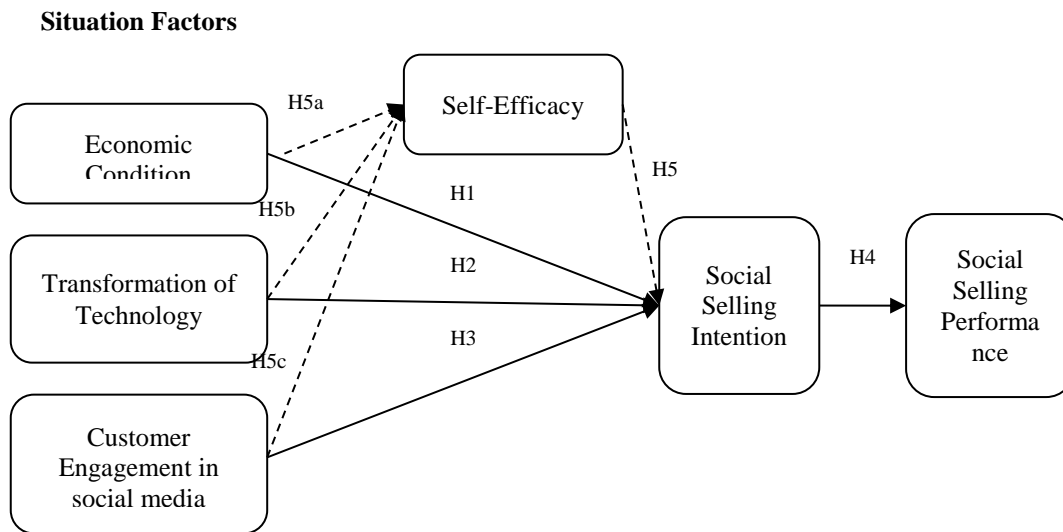
H5: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between economic condition and social selling intention.

H5a: Economic conditions have an indirect relationship with self-efficacy.

H5b: Transformation of technology has an indirect relationship with self-efficacy.

H5c: Customer engagement in social media has an indirect relationship with self-efficacy.

The determinants of situational factors which consist of economic condition, transformation of technology and customer engagement in social media, can be conceptualized as persuasion factors towards social selling intention. The assignment of the overall construct is based on the conceptualization of respective factors in other studies and from a theoretical perspective mainly depends on the above-mentioned underlying theory. Figure 1 demonstrates the overall conceptual framework of the study.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Study**

Source: Authors

## Methodology

Data for this study were collected by a quantitative survey method using two sections of the questionnaire. Economic condition, the transformation of technology, customer engagement in social media, self-efficacy, social selling intention, and social selling performance are the measuring items for the research model in Section A, while demographic data from respondents is collected in Section B. A total of 30 items were adapted from previous studies (Hossain, Naser, Zaman, & Nuseibeh, 2009; Rupak & Yang, 2014; Azadvar & Canossa, 2018; Ashrafi, 2019; Yoong & Lian, 2019; Terho et al., 2022) and modified to suit the Malaysian context, with the rate of seven-point Likert scale ranging between strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) on the statements. A purposive sampling method was employed to obtain accurate data from the studied samples. With the use of non-probability purposive sampling, a specific set of criteria was created and maintained to determine which respondents would be included in this study. This sampling method provided a valid and meaningful result as only individuals who had conducted online sales through social media were chosen in the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

According to Roscoe (1975), the sample size should fall between 30 to 500 samples. In this study, a total of 504 responses were gathered from social sellers. However, 7 responses were deleted after filtering and outlier analysis by calculating Mahalanobis distances. Social sellers need to have at least one transaction on social media and be registered under SSM Malaysia. Initial tests were conducted using SPSS 28.0 to eliminate abnormal responses before performing measurement and structural analysis. SmartPLS 4 software was employed to analyse the developed research model. SmartPLS 4 is relevant since it can predict a small set of dependent variables based on how a set of predictors is related (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016).



## Findings

### *Assessment of the Measurement Model*

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilised in the initial stages of the measurement model to assess the item's loading, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to determine the construct's goodness of measurement (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Several criteria that must met in the measurement model have been established in previous research, such as the minimum criteria of 0.5 on average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014), composite reliability (CR) values above 0.7 (Chin, 2009), and minimum loading cut-off point of 0.5 (Bagozzi & Philipps, 1991).

According to the findings demonstrated in Table 1, all the loading values have exceeded the minimum cut-off point of 0.5. All the CR values were above 0.7 (Hair, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998), and all the AVE values met the minimum criterion of 0.5 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009), indicating that convergent validity has been achieved. With these findings, the internal consistency of this study was met. The  $R^2$  value for social selling intention was 0.498 which suggested that the model moderately explained 49.8% of the variance (Cohen, 1988).

**Table 1: Results of Measurement Model**

Model construct	Measurement item	Loading	CR	AVE
Social Selling Performance (SSP)	SSP1	0.859	0.826	0.617
	SSP3	0.837		
	SSP4	0.643		
Social Selling Intention (SSI)	SSI1	0.795	0.804	0.508
	SSI3	0.655		
	SSI4	0.743		
	SSI5	0.649		
Self-Efficacy (SE)	SE1	0.775	0.857	0.547
	SE2	0.739		
	SE3	0.740		
	SE4	0.628		
	SE5	0.804		
Economic Condition (EC)	EC1	0.853	0.897	0.744
	EC2	0.867		
	EC5	0.868		
Transformation of Technology (TT)	TT1	0.993	0.993	0.986
	TT4	0.993		
Customer Engagement in Social Media (CESM)	CESM1	0.822	0.867	0.620
	CESM2	0.846		
	CESM3	0.681		
	CESM5	0.791		

According to Table 2, heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) demonstrated that all HTMT values are lower than 0.9 (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). The measurement model is deemed reliable, convergent, and discriminant valid with the findings discussed.

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity of Constructs Using HTMT**

Constructs	CESM	EC	SE	SSI	SSP	TT
CESM						
EC	0.633					
SE	0.682	0.899				
SSI	0.606	0.817	0.859			
SSP	0.869	0.875	0.887	0.766		
TT	0.478	0.898	0.657	0.687	0.694	

Note: Discriminant validity is established as HTMT <0.90 (Gold et al., 2001)

### *Assessment of the Structural Model*

The remaining hypotheses were examined using the standardised coefficient beta values, p-values, and t-values from the structural model. As a two-tailed hypothesis testing, t-values must be greater than 1.96. As stated in Table 3, statistical results showed that six out of eight hypotheses were supported. The study found that social sellers' intentions to sell online were influenced by the transformation of technology, customer engagement in social media, and the mediating effect of self-efficacy. Besides that, self-efficacy was found to mediate the relationship between economic condition and customer engagement in social media. Social selling intention was also found to affect social selling performance. As a result, the findings revealed that H2, H3, H4, H5, H5a, and H5c were supported, but H1 and H5b were not. The variance inflation factors (VIF) in Table 3 checked on the multicollinearity issue. There were no multicollinearity issues across the investigated constructs as all the VIF values were less than 10 (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005) (Refer to Figure 2).

**Table 3: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing**

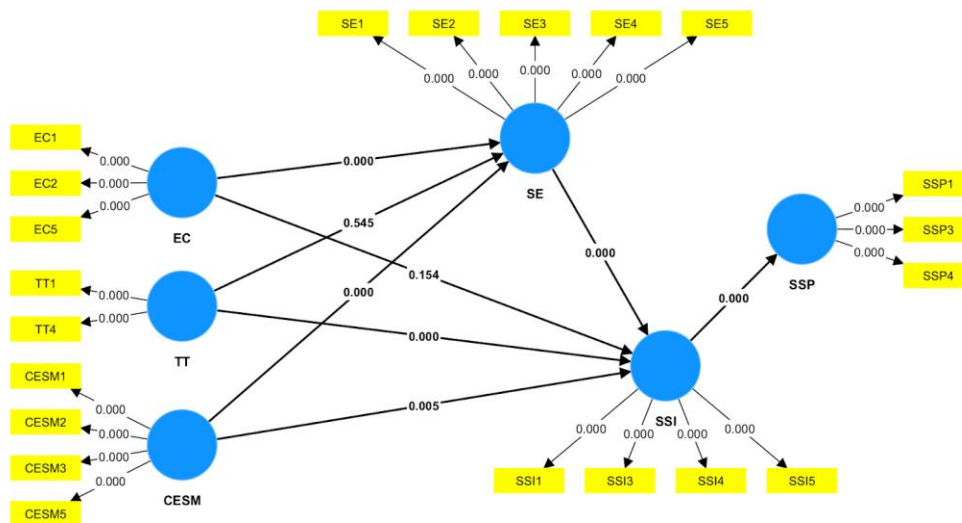
Hypothesis	Standard beta	t-Value	p-Value	Decision	VIF
H1: Economic Condition -> Social Selling Intention	0.092	1.425	0.154	Not Supported	4.341
H2: Transformation of Technology -> Social Selling Intention	0.199	3.642	0.000	Supported	2.957
H3: Customer Engagement in Social Media -> Social Selling Intention	0.110	2.818	0.005	Supported	1.518
H4: Social Selling Intention -> Social Selling Performance	0.579	19.400	0.000	Supported	1.000
H5: Self Efficacy -> Social Selling Intention	0.417	8.950	0.000	Supported	2.415
H5a: Economic Condition -> Self Efficacy -> Social Selling Intention	0.270	6.724	0.000	Supported	3.329
H5b: Transformation of Technology -> Self Efficacy -> Social Selling Intention	-0.014	0.600	0.549	Not Supported	2.955
H5c: Customer Engagement in Social Media -> Self Efficacy -> Social Selling Intention	0.095	5.181	0.000	Supported	1.393

Source: Authors

The objective of this study is to determine the mediating effect of self-efficacy between economic condition, transformation of technology, and customer engagement in social media on the intention to sell on social media with the result of the performances. Figure 2 summarises the results with regard to the hypothesised structural relationships of the constructs, showing that six out of eight path coefficients depicted on the respective arrows are statistically significant, as reflected in Table 3. The correlation between economic condition and social selling intention was examined in Hypothesis 1. Surprisingly, results demonstrated that economic conditions have no effect on the social selling intention ( $p = 0.154$ ;  $t = 1.425$ ). The findings indicated that social sellers have less confidence in an action with a lower level of economic condition. This result was congruent with the findings of past researchers (Luc, 2018; Ali & Salem, 2022). Hypothesis H5b, which examined the relationship of self-efficacy between the transformation of technology and social selling intention, was also found to have no discernible effect ( $p = 0.549$ ;  $t = 0.600$ ). These divergent findings could be explained due to the fact that most individuals are tech-savvy. Therefore, it is believed that some barriers to social selling such as a lower level of economic

condition and the confidence level toward a new technology being in place, point to the contrast in the findings of the study.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 examined the relationship between the transformation of technology and customer engagement in social media on social selling intention. As expected, findings indicated that the transformation of technology ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $t = 3.642$ ) and customer engagement in social media ( $p = 0.005$ ;  $t = 2.818$ ) have a positive effect on social selling intention. The results indicate that external factors could influence social sellers toward a decision for better performance. Apart from that, self-efficacy was found to mediate the relationship between economic condition ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $t = 6.742$ ) and customer engagement in social media ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $t = 5.181$ ) toward social selling intention, supporting H5a and H5c. Social selling intention was found to have a significant effect on social selling performance ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $t = 19.4$ ). The result is congruent with earlier studies that have already connected social media use to salesperson selling performance (Guenzi & Nijssen, 2020; Bowen et al., 2021). The study of Terho et al. (2022) has confirmed that social selling would increase social selling performance in terms of salespersons' thought leadership, relational performance, and outcome performances. The results indicated that a good intention will lead to a good performance. Moreover, the economic conditions of social sellers would affect the confidence level to engage in a new venture.



**Figure 2: Research Model with Path Coefficient and P-Values**

Source: Authors

## Discussion

The statistical analysis of this study revealed that situational factors such as technological advancements, customer engagement in social media, and self-efficacy significantly impacts the adoption of social media among social sellers in Malaysia. The result of transformation of technology was aligned with Troise, Ben-Hafaïedh, Tani, and Yablonsky (2022), and Lesinskis, Mavlutova, Spilbergs, and Hermanis, (2023) who stated the importance of technology that

enhances an individual's intention toward certain behaviour. Technological advancements increased connectivity worldwide, allowing businesses to engage with a broader audience and leverage social networking sites for seamless communication and interaction (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Social sellers are motivated to adopt technology to reach a wider customer base and leverage data analytics tools to gain valuable insights into customer preferences and behaviours (Bughin & Manyika, 2018). Furthermore, customer engagement in social media serves as an opportunity for businesses to explore their brand via the customers like, share, and comment on the content that would affect others' perceptions and create a sense of credibility and trust (Liu, Wright, & Hu, 2018). Engaged customers often become brand ambassadors, sharing positive word-of-mouth and providing valuable feedback for businesses to refine their social-selling strategies and improve customer satisfaction. Self-efficacy is a key determinant in how individuals perceive and respond to the situational factors. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to see challenges as manageable and proactively adapt to changing situations (Benfer, Bardeen, & Clauss, 2018). Additionally, individuals with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater task persistence, commitment, and intention in the face of challenging circumstances (Pekkala & van Zoonen, 2022).

The findings of this study demonstrated that social selling intentions have a positive impact on social selling performance. As stated by Yum and Yoo (2023), building authentic connections and fostering relationships with customers can lead to increased satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, ultimately contributing to successful social selling. A customer-centric approach focused on developing strong relationships and engaging in co-creation with customers can strengthen the bond between businesses and the audiences (Guha, Harrigan, & Soutar, 2018). Satisfied customers who have positive relationship experiences are more inclined to recommend and advocate for the brand (Sashi & Brynildsen, 2022). Leveraging the convenience of social media by integrating technology and automation tools, such as chatbots and real-time support, can streamline the sales process and offer instant solutions to customer inquiries (van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, & Verhoef, 2010). Utilising data and insights from social media to understand customer preferences and behaviours assists businesses meet customer expectations and deliver personalised content that resonates with their audience (Madhumita, Sangita, & Justin, 2022).

## Conclusion

The Theory of Planned Behaviour was utilised to examine the influences of economic conditions, transformation of technology, and customer engagement in social media on social selling intention and finally lead to social selling performance. Notably, the main objective study was to investigate how self-efficacy mediated the relationship between economic condition, transformation of technology, and customer engagement in social media on social selling intention. The findings of this study would contribute to future researchers' fundamental knowledge of the phenomenon of social selling intentions. In addition, this study found that the transformation of technology and customer engagement in social media were the reasons for social sellers to engage in social selling activities. The study also enhanced the importance of knowledge self-efficacy in the online entrepreneurship and online business context. Furthermore, the implementation of the Theory of Planned Behaviour has been shown as an applicable theory to explain the influences on social

selling intention which was built based on attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control to test the influence of self-efficacy on behavioural intention. Therefore, it is recommended that the government should focus on education and incentives to engage in new technology to increase social selling activities. This gives the government the chance to stimulate the economy and improve the quality of living of Malaysians.

The limitation of this study concerned the alternative factor that might affect social selling intention. Conducting an extensive range of possibilities would have more discoveries. Additionally, the collected data solely reflects social sellers' opinion on the situational factors but no other factors such as the technology acceptance factor. Future studies can be done to broaden the research on social selling intentions from different perspectives.

### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the University of Technology Sarawak (UTS) for providing us with the facilities to complete this research. This transdisciplinary research is part of a dissertation which was submitted as partial fulfilment to meet requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at University of Technology Sarawak (UTS).

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