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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effect of Social Media Factors on Complex Buying Behavior in the Insurance Industry with Social Class as a Moderating Factor

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the role of social media on complex buying behavior in the insurance industry, with a specific focus on the moderating effect of social class. The increasing popularity of social media has provided a new opportunity for businesses to boost sales. The slow growth of the insurance penetration rate in Malaysia leaves many Malaysians at financial risk. Hence, understanding how social media can affect complex buying behavior should help insurance companies boost their sales. This study focuseson is Klang Valley population, since it is diverse in terms of race, financial status, and religion, making it a suitable sample. This study is using the theory of Reasoned Action and Social Identity Theory to investigate how social media can affect complex buying behavior in the insurance industry, with social class as a moderating factor. The methodology used in this study is an online survey; it was designed and distributed to target respondents in Klang Valley using purposive sampling. A total of 211 responses were gained, and only 178 of them are valid responses. The responses were analyzed with SPSS and Partial Least Squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings of the study discuss that both user reviews and social proof were discovered to have a significant influence on complex buying behavior in the insurance industry. However social media influencer does not significantly affect complex buying behavior. Furthermore, it was also found that social class does not moderate the relationship between social proof and complex buying behavior in the insurance industry. The results contribute to the academic literature by reinforcing the relevance of TRA and SIT in understanding consumer decision-making in complex purchases.

INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer decisions, influencing everything from everyday purchases to complex financial commitments such as insurance policies. This research focused on understanding the effect that user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers have on complex buying behavior. Given the latest trends where social media tends to be one of the sources of information, companies keep on trying to improve their brand image on social media. Hence by understanding how user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers in social media affect complex buying behavior will be very helpful to help insurance companies focus on the right strategies for their company.

Many people nowadays spend their free time on social media. As of February 2025, over 5 billion people worldwide use social media, representing 62.6% of the global population (Dave, 2025). Unlike 20 years ago, leisure time was often spent on outdoor activities, watching television, or reading. Today, much of people's leisure time is spent online, either on social media or playing video games. When asking or looking for opinions, people are going to social media to look for reviews or professional advice. The rise of social media has shifted business marketing strategies to focus more on social media. Many studies have been conducted to measure the effect of social

media on buying behavior (Madhuhansi, 2019; Arora, 2024; Rebecca, 2022), but not many studies focus on complex buying behavior, especially in the insurance industry. Moreover, social class has been widely studied as a factor influencing consumer behavior, with research suggesting that higher-income consumers tend to rely more on expert reviews while lower-income consumers prioritize peer recommendations (Yakub, 2014; Noémie, 2022). However, the extent to which social class moderates the influence of social proof on complex buying behavior remains unclear, particularly in the insurance industry. While some scholars argue that social class shapes consumer reliance on digital endorsements, others suggest that increased digital accessibility has reduced class-based differences in decision-making (Huang, 2025).

Given the lack of conclusive findings on the moderating role of social class in social proof-driven insurance purchases, this study seeks to bridge this research gap by investigating how social proof in social media influences complex buying behavior in the insurance industry and if this relationship is significantly moderated by social class. By addressing these gaps, the study aims to provide insight that can help insurance companies, businesses, and insurance agents optimize their marketing strategies to enhance consumer trust and conversion rates. Additionally, existing studies in the field of social media have predominantly focused on a few specific areas, leaving gaps in the exploration of other relevant factors that may potentially affect complex buying behavior. Most studies have been using the theory of reasoned action to support buying behavior in the fashion industry (Xue, 2023; Chowdhury, 2024), the food industry (Wei, 2023; Rini, 2024), and other tangible products but it has not been applied in complex buying behavior setting especially in insurance industry. However, given the importance of trust and credibility in the insurance industry, it is important to understand how social media factors such as user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers serve as the key factors in shaping consumer buying behavior with age as the moderating factor.

Despite the extensive research on social media and consumer buying behavior (Ali, 2019; Onunko, 2022; Sachin, 2020; Varghese, 2021), few studies have investigated the impact on complex purchasing behavior in the insurance industry. Because of the long-term financial commitment, buying insurance products is different from other types of consumer products. Moreover, while user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers are found to have a significant relationship with consumer behavior (Dwidienawati, 2020; Deepha, 2024; Floyd, 2014), their effect on complex buying behavior remains unclear. Previous studies have also not taken social class as a moderating variable between social proof and complex buying behavior in previous studies. Most studies focus on demographic segmentation (Faizal, 2022; Rand, 2023), but social class involves deeper psychological factors, influencing how consumers interpret and react to social media marketing efforts. Hence, this study addresses a critical gap by examining how social class moderates social proof and complex buying behavior while looking into the relationship between user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers with complex buying behavior in the insurance industry.

In light of this, this study integrates the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explore the factors influencing complex buying behavior in the insurance industry, responding to the growing need to understand how social media can affect complex buying behavior. This study will examine the role of user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers in shaping complex buying behavior and social class as the moderating factor between social proof and complex buying behavior. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on social media-driven consumer behavior in complex buying behavior and will provide valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

Based on the above mentioned, this study aims to provide insurance companies, agents and other complex businesses with some implications. Next, the literature review will be presented in section 2, followed by development of the conceptual model and the hypothesis development in section 3. Next, in section 4 and 5 the study will discuss about the result and discussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is discussing the relationship of each independent variable which are user review, social proof and social media influencer with dependent variable which is complex buying behavior. It also discusses the gaps and theories use to support the study.

User Review and Complex Buying Behavior in the Insurance Industry

In the insurance sector, social media user reviews have a significant impact on how consumers make purchasing decisions (Yingxuan, 2024). User reviewson social media platforms may have a big impact on customers' selections about insurance products as they turn more and more to online sources for advice and suggestions. Compared to commercial content, user reviewson social media are frequently seen as being real and honest (Christine, 2021). Consumers depend on these reviews for advice because they value peer opinions and experiences more than conventional advertising. Consumers and reviewers may frequently connect and communicate directly through social media reviews. This interaction can provide potential customers the chance to clarify their comprehension and make additional decisions by giving them the chance to ask questions (Schin, 2020). Reviews are more relevant to customers when they are written by people who share their living circumstances or demographics. Reviews from people with related profiles are more credible since potential customers may see themselves in those situations. Consumer impression may also be affected by how insurance firms handle critical online reviews (Rijitha, 2021). Even in the face of unfavourable reviews, responsive and proactive businesses may win customers' trust by addressing their problems.

Social media user reviews have a significant impact on how consumers behave in the insurance sector. They offer real-world, realistic, and aesthetically appealing insights into the lives of insurance clients (Kaiyi, 2023). These reviews can persuade customers to select particular insurance providers and products based on the experiences provided by their peers by affecting trust, relatability, and decision-making. Positive user reviews may shift the scales in favour of one product over another, especially when a buyer is deciding between several high-stakes alternatives(Rane, 2023). In contrast, unfavorable reviews may cause a customer to reconsider or seek further information, adding to the complexity of the decision-making process (Rane, 2023).Therefore, user reviews on social media are more than simply a passive source of information, they are an active component that influences how customers approach difficult purchase choices (Valkenburg, 2021). It emphasises the significance of social media interaction and review management in shaping consumer behavior in high-involvement purchasing situations (Gupta, 2020).

H1: User reviews in social media are positively related to complex buying behavior

Social Proof and Complex Buying Behavior in the Insurance Industry

In the insurance sector, social proof has a substantial impact on customer purchasing decisions. In circumstances when there is uncertainty, people tend to base their conclusions on the acts and behaviors of others. This psychological phenomenon is known as social proof (Otterbring, 2024). Social proof may have a significant influence on how customers choose their insurance providers and products in the insurance industry. People frequently seek advice from their friends, family, and peers while making insurance selections (Made, 2022). They are more inclined to think about a certain insurer or policy if someone in their social circle had satisfaction with it.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that consumers look for approval of their choices (Tandon, 2021). The choice of a particular insurance product or provider is validated by positive reviews and recommendations from others, boosting the consumer's confidence in their choice. Given the variety of plans and providers offered by the insurance sector, consumers may feel overloaded with options. Social proof helps decision-making by emphasising the most common and respected solutions, which helps to reduce the number of available possibilities (Naveen, 2020). Hence, social proof uses the perspectives and experiences of others to influence customer purchasing decisions. Consumer perceptions of insurance companies, plans, and the value of coverage are substantially influenced by favourable reviews, recommendations, peer behavior, and the actions of influencers (Muammar, 2024).

Social proof can minimise the perceived risk of complex transactions. When customers perceive that others have had excellent experiences with a product or service, they feel more secure in making the same decision (Ariffin, 2018). This decrease in perceived risk is critical in complex purchasing scenarios with high stakes. Social proof is an important aspect in influencing customer complex purchasing behavior. When customers see good indications from others, whether through reviews, ratings, endorsements, or popularity, they are more inclined to participate actively in the purchasing process (Talib, 2017). This leads to a more educated, confident, and careful decision-making process, especially in complex buying circumstances when the perceived risk is large.

H2: Social proof is positively related to complex buying behavior

Social Media Influencer and Complex Buying Behavior in the Insurance Industry

Influencers frequently position themselves as gurus in their specialised fields. Influencers in the insurance sector may enlighten their followers on the many forms of insurance, the available coverage alternatives, and the value of insurance so that customers can make better choices (Adnan, 2024). Influencers frequently share their personal experiences and stories to build a deep emotional bond with their audience (Daniel, 2021). Influencers might inspire customers to think about comparable choices by sharing their own positive experiences with insurance. Influencers on social media may significantly affect customer purchasing decisions in the insurance sector. Influencers may help people choose insurance providers and products wisely by using their honesty, knowledge, personal connections, and capacity to produce meaningful and interesting content.

Social media influencers frequently create trusted relationships with their followers. When they advocate or propose insurance products, for instance, their followers are more inclined to believe them (Taillon, 2020). This trust may inspire customers to investigate and evaluate the recommended insurance products more carefully. Especially in the insurance sector, it is recognised for its complexity, with numerous terms, conditions, and alternatives that can be confusing for customers (Tobing, 2022). Influencers frequently simplify this information, allowing their audience to better comprehend the benefits and features of various insurance policies. This simplicity can increase consumers' confidence in their purchase decisions (Azkiah, 2023).

H3: Social media influencer is positively related to complex buying behavior.

Social Class as a Moderating Variable between Social Proof and Complex Buying Behavior

Social class has an impact on what people find relevant and significant. Because it is consistent with the preferences of their peers, social proof from people in the same social class is frequently more convincing. Social evidence that matches the tastes of their social class is more likely to persuade consumers (Syed, 2023). Different social classes frequently aspire to different types of lifestyles. Social evidence that depicts a way of life that members of a certain class aspire to can have a significant impact on their purchasing decisions (Mark, 2003). For instance, social proof that emphasises exclusivity or elegance may have an impact on those in higher social levels. Social class might affect the standards that people use to judge situations. While lower social classes could place more importance on affordability, higher social classes might concentrate on product quality (Javeria, 2023). These decision criteria's alignment with social proof may influence their decisions. Different standards and values often emerge among social classes. Social proof that upholds these standards and principles can be very convincing. Consumers are more inclined to adopt behaviors that are consistent with the standards of their class (Chatterjee, 2021).

Social proof shapes opinions about the dependability and attractiveness of a good or service, fosters trust, and provides knowledge, all of which have an impact on customer decisions (Ky, 2024). Certain forms of social proof may elicit varied reactions from members of various social classes (Ky, 2024). For example, people in lower social classes may be more swayed by practicality and affordability, whereas people in higher social classes may be more tempted by exclusivity and luxury.

H4: Social class moderates the relationship between social proof and complex buying behavior.

Theoretical Review

The study uses both SIT and TRA as an informing theory to study the social media effect on complex buying behavior in the insurance industry. The TRA provides a foundation for understanding the dependent variable, while Social Identity Theory SIT supports the independent variables, such as user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers, by focusing on how individuals can be influenced by online communities on social media in shaping their complex buying behavior.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Consumer Decision-Making

Social Identity Theory is defined as a social group that provides people with a feeling of identity and self-esteem (McLeod, 2023). This theory tends to conform their behavior, attitudes, and actions to the norms and ideals of these communities. Consumers frequently make purchase decisions that reflect their social identities (Niosi, 2021). Social Identity Theory is used to support the independent

variables, which are social media user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers. When potential clients read positive user reviews from others, especially those they know and trust, then supports their idea that acquiring a certain insurance product is the best option (Talib, 2023). This is because they see those reviewers as part of members from their social group, and conforming to the group's behavior reinforces their social identity. In the insurance industry, which frequently includes complex decision-making, witnessing a big number of individuals, especially those with similar identities or values, selecting a specific insurance policy can have a substantial impact on a potential buyer's decision (Dwivedi, 2021). They see the product's popularity as an indication of its quality and dependability (Geodegebure, 2021). Social media influencers frequently maintain a close, trusted relationship with their followers, who may regard them as role models or members of the same social group (Kim, 2022). When influencers support an insurance product, their followers are more likely to regard the endorsement as legitimate and reliable (Coutinho, 2023). Purchasing insurance can usually be a complex process since it requires big financial commitments and faith in the product. Consumers often want confirmation that they are making the correct decision (Weedige, 2019). They might feel more secure in their decision after seeing good social proof (such as reviews, influencers, and the acts of others in their social networks). According to Social Identity Theory, this reassurance is effective because it corresponds with their desire to make decisions that conform to the norms and values of their social group (Bar-On, 2023).

Theory of Reasoned Action and Complex Buying Behavior

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is a psychological theory that explains how people choose to engage in specific behaviors (Silverman, 2016). It implies that a person's behavior is driven by their purpose to do the behavior, which is impacted by two critical factors: The attitudes, which are how the individual feels about the behavior. If people feel the behavior is advantageous, they are more inclined to engage in it and Subjective Norms: This refers to the social pressure a person experiences from others. (Calabro, 2023), If individuals believe that others who are important to them (such as friends, family, or society) expect them to engage in the behavior, they are more likely to do so (Calabro, 2023).According to TRA, a consumer's desire to buy a product is the most accurate indicator of their actual purchasing behavior (Joshi, 2015). Social media may greatly influence these intentions by reinforcing favourable views and establishing strong subjective standards, causing customers to plan to buy a product, which frequently leads to real purchase behavior (Rijitha, 2021).
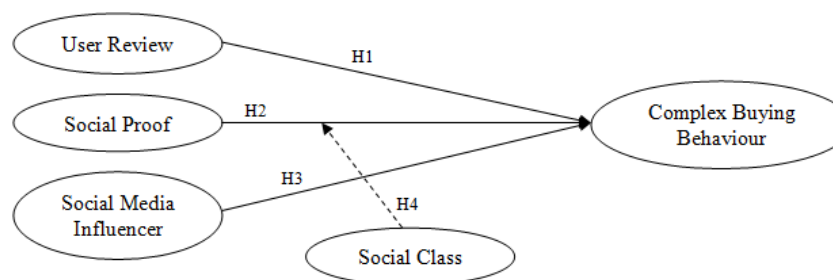

Figure 1. The research model for this study.

In this study, TRA helps to explain how social media content, such as user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers, influences complex buying behavior. TRA will help researchers to better understand and measure how social media impacts the way consumers think about, intend to, and ultimately will decide to purchase complex products. Figure 1 indicates the development of research model is from theoretical discussed above.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach utilizing a descriptive survey method to examine the effect of social proof on complex buying behavior in the insurance industry. The descriptive approach is appropriate as it aims to systematically analyze and quantify relationships between the variables under investigation. During the data collection, the designed questionnaires were distributed using purposive sampling through Google Forms. The purposive sampling method was employed in this study due to the unavailability of a complete sampling frame in the given

context. This approach assists in selecting valid samples and helps minimize non-response bias (Xi, 2024). It is worth noting that both (Sharizami, 2018) and (Shamri, 2021) have utilised a similar method when examining customers' buying behavior. To ensure the suitability of potential respondents who need to be social media and insurance users, two pre-screening questions were included as selection criteria in the sampling technique. The first question inquired whether they are a social media user. The second question assessed whether they had subscribed to or bought any insurance plan. Respondents who did not meet these pre-screening criteria were excluded from the study. To ensure more accurate responses, the researcher provided a brief introduction in each section to ensure that respondents understood the questionnaire better.

Measurement of Variables

All constructs' measurement items were adapted based on previous literature, with minor adaptation of the social media context. All items of the survey were designed in English. Next, all items were assessed by professors and lecturers, including industry experts who are senior leaders in the insurance industry. Before the questionnaire was distributed, we conducted a pilot test with 30 respondents. The result shows that Cronbach's alpha of all questionnaire items is larger than 0.70 in the pilot study, thus, all proposed items of each construct are valid and reliable (Hair, 2020). The items of user review were adopted from Teena (2013), Chosen (2022), Nadine (2015; Hinterstein, 2020; Park, 2015; Cheol, 2011; and Sonja, 2011. For social proof, the items were adopted and adapted from Hinterstein (2020 and Chong (2022. Next, for Social Media Influencer, the items were adopted and adapted from Javier (2022), Noémie (2022 and Rukon (2022. Finally, for consumer buying behavior, the items were adopted from Teena (2013), Chong (2022), Young (2010, and Yogesh (2021. These items were measured using a 1-5 Likert scale questionnaire.

Data Analysis Procedure

Firstly, SPSS was used for the assessment of respondents' demographic profiles and the test of common method bias. Secondly, Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using Smart PLS (Cheah, 2024) was employed in the study to maximize the variance explained in the latent dependent variables, and has been widely employed in the social media field. Specifically, the study used Smart PLS-SEM for three reasons. Firstly, it is ideal for complex models with moderators, for which Smart PLS can handle the interaction well (Ali, 2021). Second, there are many past studies proven that PLS-SEM is best suited for testing complex variables (Becker,2023). Finally, since the study has gathered a small amount of data, using Smart PLS is suitable than AMOS.

RESULTS

A total of 211 data points were collected, after excluding responses that do not meet the study criteria, 178 valid responses were finally confirmed. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants with valid responses.

Table 1. Result of demographic profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage	Frequency
Gender	Male	34.8 %	62
	Female	65.2 %	116
Age	20 – 30	47.8 %	85
	31 - 40	20.8 %	37
	41 – 50	16.3 %	29
	51 – 60	15.2 %	27
Annual Income	< 60,000 (Bottom class)	19.7 %	35
	61,000 – 100,000 (Middle Class)	23.0 %	41
	101,000 – 120,000 (Upper class)	39.3 %	70

	>120,000 (High class)	18.0 %	32
Social Media User	Yes	100 %	178
	No	0 %	0
Insurance user	Yes	100 %	178
	No	0%	0

To assess the measure the reliability and validity of the construct, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, and AVE (Average Variance Extracted) were used. Table2 shows the result of each construct. All construct has the value of Cronbach's Alpha more than 0.7, which means all are reliable. The composite reliability of all constructs also shows more than 0.7, which means all constructs are reliable. Finally, for validity, all construct has a total value of more than 0.5, which means acceptable and valid. The study adopts a five-point Likert scale for consistency across constructs and employs PLS-SEM for hypothesis testing. Reliability and validity assessments confirm that the measurement model is robust and suitable for further analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) and SPSS to examine the relationships between User Review and Complex Buying Behavior, with Social Proof acting as a moderating factor. The results of the hypothesis results discussed as follows. The findings indicate that User Review (r = .678, p < 0.01) and Social Proof (r = .661, p < 0.01) have a strong positive correlation with Consumer Behavior. This suggests that higher levels of user reviews and social proof are associated with increased consumer buying behavior.

Table 2. Validity and reliability results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Interpretation
User Review	.874	0.904	0.576	Reliable and Valid
Social Proof	.957	0.964	0.795	Highly reliable and Valid
Social Media Influencer	.880	0.904	0.542	Reliable and valid
Complex Buying Behavior	.903	0.920	0.538	Reliable and valid

Additionally, Social Media Influencer (r = .437, p < 0.01) has a moderate positive correlation with Consumer Behavior, indicating that while influencers impact consumer decisions, their influence is not as strong as user reviews and social proof. The inter correlations among the independent variables were also examined. User Review and Social Proof (r = .731, p < 0.01) showed a very strong correlation, while Social Proof and Social Media Influencer (r = .580, p < 0.01) demonstrated a moderate correlation. This suggests that social proof and user reviews often coexist in influencing consumer behavior. Besides SPSS, this study also used Smart PLS to test the hypotheses. A relationship is considered statistically significant if the T-value is greater than 1.96 and the P-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the hypothesis is supported at a 95% confidence level.

Moderation Analysis

Social class (SC) was tested using PLS-SEM to assess its moderating effect. This section examines the moderating effects of social class on the relationship between Social Proof (SP) and Complex Buying Behavior (CB). Moderation analysis was conducted using SmartPLS by assessing the interaction term (SP x SC). The result indicates whether these moderators significantly influence the strength or direction of the relationships between the independent variable and dependent variable.

Table 3. Moderation results

Moderating effect	β (Coefficient)	T-Value	P-Value	Result
SP x SC → CB	0.098	1.649	0.099	Not Significant

Table3 shows the result of the moderating effect. Based on Table 3, it was found that social class does not significantly moderate the relationship between social proof and complex buying behavior. The reason for this is that the β (coefficient = 0.098), which means that social class only has a very small effect on social proof and complex buying behavior. The T-value is also below the common threshold of 1.96 for significance at the 5% level. Finally, the P-value is 0.099, which is above the standard significance threshold (0.05), which means the effect is not statistically significant. Hence, social proof influences complex buying behavior regardless of social class.

Table 4. Summary of hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Coefficient)	T-Value	P-Value	Result
H1	UR → CB	0.349	2.769	0.006	Supported
H2	SP → CB	0.372	2.785	0.005	Supported
H3	SMI → CB	0.065	0.742	0.458	Not Supported
H4	SP xSC → CB	0.098	1.649	0.099	Not Supported

DISCUSSION

The results of the hypothesis testing provide valuable insights into the role of social media factors in influencing consumer buying behavior (CB) within the insurance industry. The findings highlight both significant and non-significant relationships, which contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of user reviews (UR), social proof (SP), and social media influencers (SMI), as well as the moderating effect of age on consumer behavior. The hypothesis H1 (UR → CB) is supported (β = 0.349, t = 2.769, p = 0.006), indicating that user reviews significantly influence consumer buying behavior. This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in guiding purchasing decisions (Prashanti, 2024; Abduraimov, 2024). Consumers often rely on peer-generated feedback to assess the credibility and effectiveness of insurance products, making user reviews a critical factor in shaping purchase decisions. Similarly, H2 (SP → CB) is supported (β = 0.372, t = 2.785, p = 0.005), confirming that social proof plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making. This suggests that consumers are influenced by the actions of others, particularly in the insurance industry, where trust and perceived popularity can enhance confidence in purchasing decisions. This finding is consistent with social identity theory (SIT), which posits that individuals conform to group norms when making decisions (Xue, 2023; Chowdhury, 2024). Contrary to expectations, H3 (SMI → CB) is not supported (β = 0.065, t = 0.742, p = 0.458), indicating that social media influencers do not significantly affect consumer buying behavior in the insurance sector. This result diverges from findings in other industries such as fashion and beauty, where influencers play a dominant role in shaping consumer preferences (Wei, 2023; Rini, 2024). A possible explanation is that insurance is a high-involvement, complex purchase requiring expert advice rather than influencer endorsements. Consumers may prefer professional reviews, testimonials, or direct interactions with insurance agents over influencer promotions. The moderation analysis shows that H4 (SC x SP→ CB) is not supported (β = 0.098, T = 1.649, P = 0.099), which indicates that social class does not significantly moderate the relationship between social proof and complex buying behavior. This contradicts with previous study that found different social classesrely on social proof differently (Amin, 2020). One possible reason is that in complex buying behavior like insurance, consumers across all social classes may rely on expert opinions, brand reputation, and research rather than purely just social proof. To summarize, both lowerand higher-class consumers may prioritize rational evaluation over social validation, thereby weakening the moderating effect of social class on social proof.

Implications and Contributions

This study extends the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by demonstrating that user reviews and social proof are key drivers of consumer buying behavior in complex purchasing contexts like insurance. However, the insignificant role of social media influencers suggests that influencer marketing strategies may be ineffective in this sector. It also extends Social Identity Theory (SIT) by confirming that social influence in the form of user reviews and social proof plays a vital role in

shaping complex buying behavior. Consumers rely on online communities to validate their purchase decisions, which align with the principles of SIT that emphasize the role of group identity in behavior.

Insurance companies should prioritize enhancing customer reviews and leveraging social proof strategies such as testimonials and community engagement rather than relying on influencer marketing. Next, businesses should also consider using AI to engage with customer reviews in real time. Additionally, given that social class does not moderate the effect of social proof and complex buying behavior, marketing strategies should be consistent across social class groups rather than segmented. Future studies should explore other potential moderators, such as risk perception or product complexity, which may better explain variations in consumer responses to social media influences.

Asia is home to over 2 billion social media users, with countries like China, India, and Indonesia leading in numbers (Digital Marketing for Asia, 2025). The study has a significant effect on businesses operating in the Asia market, especially in the complex buying behavior context. With the rapid widespread use of social media platforms in Asia, businesses must recognize the profound effect of user reviews, social proof, and social media influencers on complex buying decisions. Understanding this effect will help businesses to create an effective marketing strategy that align with consumer preferences and behavior. One important finding in this study is the role of social proof in shaping consumer decisions. Collectivism plays an important role in Asian culture when it comes to buying behavior (Kenneth, 2022). This means that people usually rely on peer recommendations, user reviews, and influencers before they make purchasing decisions. Hence, businesses must leverage this by actively engaging with customers on social media, encouraging positive reviews collaborating with a professional influencer who is an expert in the field of the business. This will enhance consumer trust and ultimately lead to more sales.

Moreover, in many parts of Asia, there is a strong cultural emphasis on speed and efficiency, especially in business and service industries. Consumers in Asia expect a fast response and prompt issue resolution. Therefore, as the study suggests in the practical implication section, businesses should use AI to respondto user reviews in real time, especially in Asia. By implementing AI-powered chatbots and automated response systems, companies can efficiently manage user reviews and address inquiries in real time.

Brand trust and social proof matter in Asian culture; local brands outperform global brands in many Asian markets. Hence, to build trust in the Asian market, businesses need to be highly interactive and engaging on social media. A strong, engaging digital presence not only boosts brand reputation but also increases social proof, as pleasant consumer experiences and recommendations encourage greater acceptance. According to the findings, once trust is established, it may considerably increase sales and customer loyalty, making social proof an effective strategy for corporate success in Asia.

Moreover, Asian consumers tend to conduct extensive research before making complex purchases. Comparison shopping is common, with buyers checking reviews on multiple platforms before deciding. The study provides valuable insights into how businesses can leverage these factors to shape consumer perceptions and drive purchase decisions. Businesses that understand the importance of online interactions in complex buying behavior may establish customized marketing strategies that boost credibility, build trust, and ultimately improve sales in the Asian market.

Finally, Asian customers are increasingly expecting businesses to make personalized suggestions based on their browsing habits, purchasing history, and social media interactions. Given the heavy dependence on social media for purchasing choices, businesses' use of AI-powered analytics and recommendation engines can create targeted content and product suggestions based on specific customer preferences. Companies may use social media data to optimise their marketing strategies, ensuring that promotions, adverts, and product suggestions are relevant to customer interests and behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of user reviews and social proof in shaping consumer behavior in the insurance industry while challenging the effectiveness of social media influencers. These findings provide valuable insights for both academic researchers and industry practitioners looking to refine their marketing strategies in the digital landscape. The findings support the idea that

consumers depend heavily on user reviews and social proof when making complex financial decisions. The significant effect of User reviews and social proof on Complex Buying Behavior is consistent with findings from prior studies on digital marketing and consumer trust. Moreover, the study also found that social class does not significantly moderate the influence of social proof. This suggests that digital literacy and reliance on user reviews are becoming universal across all age groups. From a practical perspective, these findings highlight the importance for insurance businesses to prioritize user reviews, social proof strategies over social media influencer marketing. Future studies should consider longitudinal studies to examine how changing digital trends and emerging technology continue to impact customer trust and decision-making in financial services.

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