

Youth Engagement with Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement through Social Media Influence and Awareness: A Malaysian Perspective

TAN POH LING

Sunway University Malaysia

NURZIHAN HASSIM*

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

DICKSON ROGER MARKLEN

Xiamen University Malaysia

AZIZUN KURNIA ILLAHI

DIYAH AYU AMALIA AVINA

Universitas Brawijaya Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has become a defining lens through which social media audiences engage with the Palestinian humanitarian crisis on social media. Since the escalation of conflict in Gaza in October 2023, platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook have emerged as primary channels through which young Malaysians encounter, discuss, and share BDS-related content. Yet what motivates them to move beyond passively consuming this material toward deliberately sharing it with peers remains an open question, one with meaningful implications for understanding digital activism among Generation Z. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study investigates the role of attitude, social norms, and perceived behavioural control in shaping intention to share BDS information on social media. A quantitative survey was administered to 403 university students at public and private universities in Malaysia's Klang Valley, with data analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that students' personal attitudes toward the BDS movement and their confidence in navigating social media are the most meaningful drivers of sharing intention. Peer and social pressure, by contrast, did not emerge as a significant influence, pointing to the conclusion that when a cause resonates personally and morally, individual conviction and digital self-efficacy matter considerably more than social conformity. These insights extend the theoretical application of TPB into the domain of politically engaged digital activism and offer practical guidance for educators, campaign designers, and platform stakeholders seeking to foster informed and purposeful youth participation in global social movements.

Keywords: *BDS, boycott, social movement, digital activism, youths.*

INTRODUCTION

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement has emerged as a significant non-governmental movement that significantly influences the global discourse surrounding the ongoing Israeli military occupation of Gaza and other Palestinian territories (Steinberg, 2023). As

*Corresponding author: nurzihan@ukm.edu.my

E-ISSN: 2289-1528

<https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2026-4201-16>

Received: 10 February 2026 | Accepted: 17 March 2026 | Published: 31 March 2026

a result of a growing catastrophe that has seen over 70,000 Palestinians killed and 171,000 injured as of early 2026, according to UNRWA (2026), the lack of accountability by the oppressing parties who have contributed to the humanitarian crisis, followed by widespread social media coverage by journalists and netizens on the scene, has significantly influenced the growth of BDS activism among global youth, particularly university students. Among the movement's primary objectives was to gather support and increase awareness of Palestinian rights through peaceful key strategies to address their current challenges (Awad, 2020). There are three main strategies employed by BDS: firstly, the act of "boycotts", where BDS encourages individuals and organisations to avoid purchases of Israeli products or services which includes companies that receive profit from Israeli policies against Palestinians. Next, BDS also involves "divestment", which urges withdrawal of investments from Israel and companies complicit in violating Palestinian rights by pension funds and companies (Abunimah, 2020). Finally, BDS "sanctions" call for government sanctions where countries that have suffered from apartheid, such as South Africa, initiated the end of military trade, free-trade agreements, and Israel's membership on international forums (Erakat, 2019). The Palestinian cause has been successfully integrated into the BDS framework of establishing justice, demanding accountability, and preserving human rights in order for wider audiences to highlight Palestinian struggles of oppression, displacement, and lack of basic necessities (Morrison, 2020).

Subsequently, BDS has gained an avid worldwide following in the years that have followed its inception, demonstrating significant impact, such as Norway's sovereign wealth fund that has divested entirely from Israel Bonds worth approximately \$500 million, while Denmark's *AkademikerPension* has completely excluded Israel from its list of investments (BDS Movement, 2025). Meanwhile in America, over 160 BDS initiatives have been considered by student bodies at more than 70 colleges and universities in 2024 (Rosenfeld, 2025). Similarly, trade unions, including Service Employees International Union (SEIU) chapters and the United Auto Workers (UAW), have divested from Israeli bonds and occupation-linked investments (USCPR, 2025). It can be said that whilst addressing legitimate concerns or collaborating with others in affected communities, the BDS movement has experienced a commendable extent of success through its economic, political, and social impact becoming increasingly measurable (Singh, 2021).

Research Background

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement strategies can be considered a successful civil society campaign that has consistently challenged Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories by emphasising discourse that encourages *boycotts* of Israeli products, *divestment* urging institutions to withdraw investments linked to violations of Palestinian rights, and *sanctions* calling on governments to impose diplomatic and economic penalties through impactful messages across social media (Abunimah, 2020; Awad, 2020; Erakat, 2019). The movement and implemented strategies can be compared to interventions of earlier crises, such as the South African apartheid boycott and are grounded in principles of justice and accountability (Morrison, 2020). In doing so, knowledge and awareness of the BDS movement have become more pronounced through the proliferation of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) and, at the same time, have transformed political information dissemination, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers (Jost et al., 2018; Zeitsoff, 2023).

However, sharing BDS-related information on social media is not without challenges. The politicised nature of the movement means that users may face criticism, counter-campaigns, or accusations of bias (Ostrowski, 2020). Additionally, algorithmic content moderation on some platforms has been criticised for suppressing pro-Palestinian content, creating barriers to information dissemination (Mansour, 2022).

Even so, Generation Z youths that were born between 1997 and 2012 (better known as Gen Z) are observed to have become rising contributors to BDS movement content, as their high dependency on social media as the primary environment for information-seeking demonstrated 94% use of at least one platform daily, while 46% of these youths prefer social media over conventional search engines (Schaefer, 2026; Slotta, 2025). Within the Malaysian context, 92.7% of the population are active internet users (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2024). Similarly, TikTok and Instagram have played an influential role in mobilising young university students toward BDS movement awareness (Jalli, 2025; Nordin, 2025). The decentralised and networked structure of social media continues to facilitate BDS information sharing among motivated users, particularly university students who view digital activism as a meaningful form of political participation.

Despite this, the psychological drivers underpinning Malaysian students' deliberate decision to share rather than merely consume BDS content remain relatively underexplored. While existing scholarship has examined social media's role in political mobilisation generally (Jost et al., 2018; Suk et al., 2022) and Malaysian youth social media use specifically (Jalli, 2025; Nordin, 2025), there is limited inquiry into the attitudinal, normative, and control determinants that drive deliberate BDS information sharing. Sharing is a cognitively planned and socially consequential act, distinguishable from passive consumption, and its predictors therefore warrant distinct investigation. This study applies the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) to address this gap through two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do attitude, social norms, and perceived behavioural control predict university students' intention to share BDS information on social media?

RQ2: Which TPB construct most strongly influences students' BDS information-sharing intention?

The conceptual model in Figure 1 depicts attitude (ATD), social norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC) as predictors of behavioural intention (BI) to share BDS information on social media.

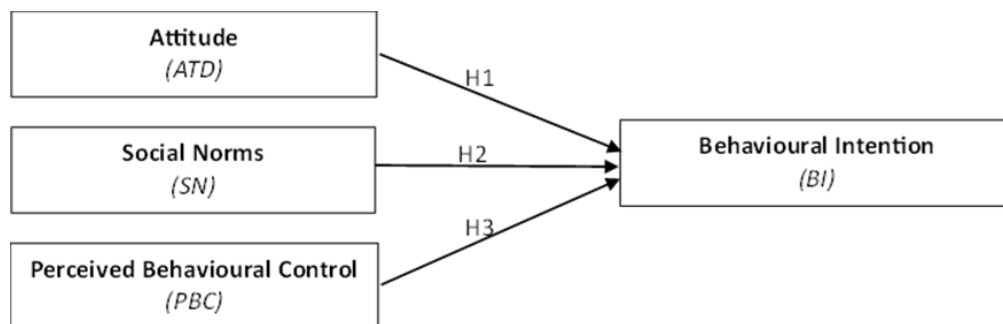


Figure 1: Conceptual model based on Theory of Planned Behaviour

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developed by Ajzen (1991), the Theory of Planned Behaviour posits that behavioural intention is determined by three constructs: *attitude* (evaluative assessment of the behaviour), *subjective norm* (perceived social pressure), and *perceived behavioural control* (perceived ease or difficulty). TPB has been validated across health communication, technology adoption, environmental behaviour, and information-sharing activities (Ajzen, 2002, 2020; Bosnjak et al., 2020). Applying TPB to BDS information sharing is theoretically justified because, (1) sharing constitutes a deliberate, planned behaviour rather than an impulsive act, aligning with TPB's explanatory scope (Ajzen, 1991); (2) the political sensitivity of BDS makes normative and control perceptions particularly salient; and (3) TPB has been successfully applied to politically sensitive online sharing behaviours (Kwon & Moon, 2020; Shin & Hwang, 2020). All constructs are operationalised specifically in terms of BDS information sharing on social media, adhering to TPB's behavioural specificity requirement, which maximises predictive validity (Ajzen, 1991).

In the context of social media use and information sharing, TPB provides a robust theoretical lens to examine why individuals engage in specific online behaviours. The framework is particularly relevant for understanding Generation Z's social media practices, as this demographic cohort has grown up immersed in digital environments and relies heavily on social media platforms for information consumption, social interaction, and civic engagement (Astari et al., 2024; Panagiotou et al., 2022). University students, representing a significant portion of Gen Z, are especially active in using social media to share information about social and political issues, including movements such as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS).

Attitude and Behavioural Intention

In TPB, *attitude* reflects an individual's overall evaluation of a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Shin and Hwang (2020) found that favourable attitudes toward social issues predict information dissemination intentions on social networking sites. Among Malaysian youth, attitudes toward ethical consumption and boycotting are shaped by Islamic values and perceptions of social responsibility (Muhamad et al., 2022), likely amplifying the attitude–intention link in the BDS context. Students who perceive alignment between BDS information sharing and their values, including solidarity with Palestinians and anti-oppression commitments that demonstrate stronger sharing intentions (Park & Yang, 2021; Yusof et al., 2021). Based on the established theoretical framework and empirical evidence demonstrating the positive relationship between attitude and behavioural intention in social media contexts, this study proposes the following:

H1: Attitude has a positive effect on university students' intention to use social media for BDS information sharing.

Social Norms and Behavioural Intention

Subjective norms reflect perceived social pressure from salient factors, namely peers, family, and online communities regarding whether one should engage in a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In collectivist cultures such as Malaysia, social norms carry heightened weight, as individuals are motivated to align behaviours with group expectations (Lee & Kim, 2019). However, for politically sensitive topics, this pathway may be attenuated: Malaysian youth have been shown to exercise caution around politically charged content due to social

repercussion concerns and face-saving considerations (Abidin & Gwynne, 2017), potentially limiting normative influence on BDS sharing. Despite these complexities, TPB posits that social norms should theoretically influence behavioural intentions. Therefore, this study proposes:

H2: Social norms have a positive effect on university students' intention to use social media for BDS information sharing.

Perceived Behavioural Control and Behavioural Intention

Perceived behavioural control (PBC) captures an individual's assessment of the ease or difficulty of performing a behaviour, encompassing both self-efficacy and controllability (Ajzen, 2002). In the BDS social media context, PBC spans technical *competence* (platform navigation skills); *informational control* (ability to verify and curate BDS content); and *social navigation control* (confidence managing potential backlash). Generation Z's digital nativity supports high baseline PBC for social media tasks (Marklen et al., 2025), and peer modelling further reinforces self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986). Users with higher perceived control demonstrate stronger information-sharing intentions (Verduyn et al., 2021). Based on the robust theoretical foundation and consistent empirical support for the relationship between perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention, this study hypothesises the following:

H3: Perceived behavioural control has a positive effect on university students' intention to use social media for BDS information sharing.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sampling

A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was employed. The target population comprised Generation Z university students (aged 18–30) enrolled at public and private universities in Malaysia's Klang Valley region — including Bangi, Petaling Jaya, Subang, Shah Alam, and Kuala Lumpur. Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants were active social media users with BDS awareness. An initial pre-test with approximately 100 participants refined item wording and survey flow. Of 405 questionnaires distributed via both face-to-face (print) and online (Google Forms) channels, 403 yielded complete, valid responses, satisfying PLS-SEM minimum thresholds (Hair et al., 2019) and power analysis guidelines (Cohen, 1992) for the proposed model.

Measurement Instrument

All constructs were measured using five-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), adapted from Ajzen (1991, 2002) and Muliadi et al. (2022), modified to reference BDS information sharing on social media specifically. **Attitude (ATD):** five items assessing evaluative beliefs about BDS information sharing; two negatively worded items (ATD2, ATD4) were reverse-coded. **Social Norms (SN):** five items reflecting perceived social desirability and normativity of using social media for BDS, capturing primarily *descriptive norms* (what peers do) rather than injunctive norms (what peers think one ought to do). **Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC):** five items capturing confidence in BDS sharing ability; two difficulty-framing items (PBC3 and PBC5) were reverse-coded. **Behavioural Intention (BI):** eight items measuring intention, planning, willingness, and recommendations to share BDS content.

Data Analysis

Demographic data were analysed using SPSS. The TPB model was tested via PLS-SEM (SmartPLS) using a two-stage approach: (1) measurement model evaluation assessing outer loadings (≥ 0.70), composite reliability (CR), ρ_A , average variance extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$), and discriminant validity via the HTMT criterion (< 0.90); and (2) structural model assessment via VIF for multicollinearity, R^2 for explanatory power, and bootstrapped path coefficients (5,000 subsamples) with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Tibbe & Montoya, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive Results

When the respondents were asked for information about Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), the majority of students reported that they obtained information related to BDS through Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These findings show that the way Gen Z consumes information differs from other generations, which have transformed to social media, as they were exposed to social media at a very young age (Astari et al., 2024; Panagiotou et al., 2022). Although university students' media consumption in Malaysia has shifted to digital media, such as social media platforms, some students get information from traditional channels, such as word of mouth, print, or even electronic media. This finding emphasises that word-of-mouth and print media remain as effective and important as digital media in this digital age (Bartschat et al., 2021).

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 403 respondents, who were predominantly female (54.6%), aged 18–20 years (46.7%), enrolled at private universities (59.3%), and Malaysian nationals (95.3%).

Table 1: Demographic profile

Variables (Measurement Items)	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	183	45.4%
	Female	220	54.6%
Age	18–20 years	188	46.7%
	21–25 years	180	44.7%
	26–30 years	34	8.4%
	36 years and above	1	0.2%
	University Type	Public University	164
	Private University	239	59.3%
Student Status	Local Student	386	95.3%
	International Student	17	4.2%
	TOTAL	403	100%

Table 2 summarises social media usage patterns. A combined 53.3% of respondents used social media seven or more times per week, and 39.7% spent four to seven hours online daily, confirming high digital engagement consistent with Malaysian MCMC (2024) data. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok were the primary sources through which respondents first encountered BDS content. The demographic data correspondingly illustrates the university students' patterns in using the internet for daily needs in Malaysia, such as social media interaction, watching videos or playing games. With an average of 4–7 hours of using the internet daily (39.7%), it is indicated

that university students or Gen Z rely on social media for various uses (Marklen et al., 2025; Muliadi et al., 2022).

Table 2: Social media usage pattern

Variables	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Frequency of Social Media Use	1–3 times a week	40	9.9%
	4–6 times a week	148	36.7%
	7–10 times a week	123	30.5%
	More than 10 times a week	92	22.8%
Daily Internet Use (hours)	1–3 hours	49	12.2%
	4–7 hours	160	39.7%
	8–12 hours	121	30.0%
	13–16 hours	69	17.1%
	17 hours and above	4	1.0%

Measurement Model

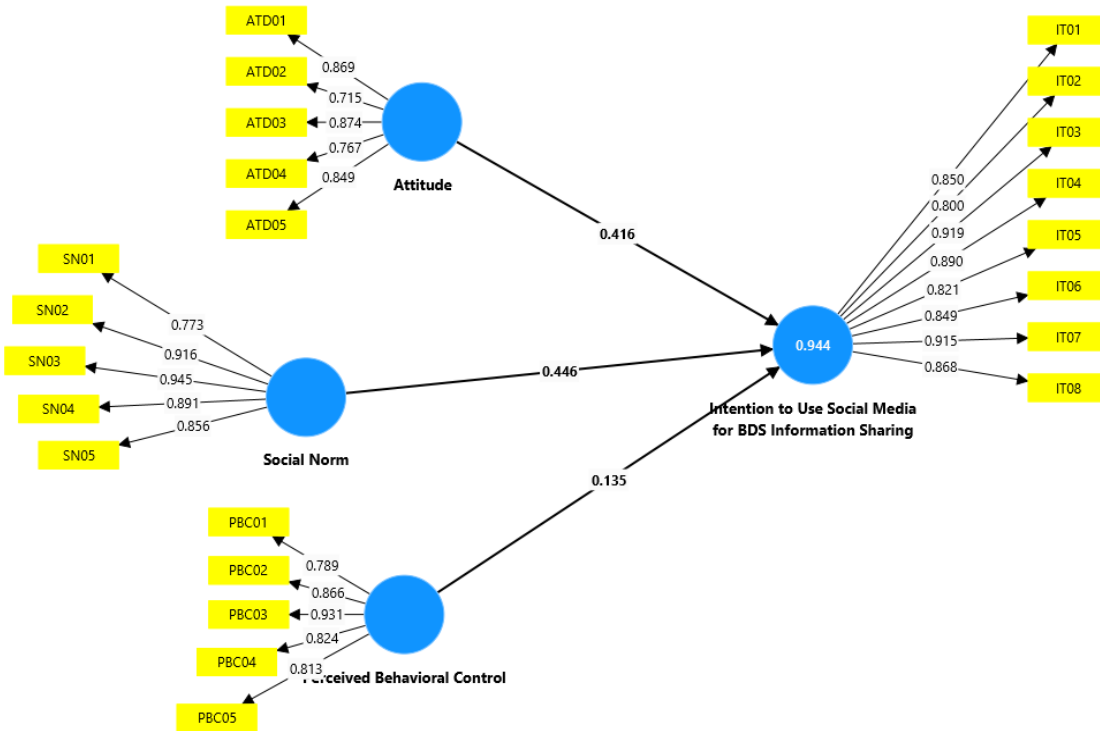


Figure 1: Measurement model

The measurement model consists of four constructs: *attitude*, *social norms*, *perceived behavioural control*, and the user's intention to use social media for BDS information sharing. Figure 1 describes the measurement model of this study. Numerous measurement methods will be applied to examine the measurement model and designate construct reliability, including composite reliability (CR), rho_A, and convergent validity. Aburumman et al. (2022) suggest that the reliability construct will be accurate if all indicators have loadings above 0.7 or more. Meanwhile, to establish convergent validity, it is suggested that all the indicator loadings of

average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5 (Fauzi, 2022). Table 3 informs the outcome of the measurement model of the study and indicates that all measurements have achieved the requirements, which signifies the establishment of reliability and convergent validity for the framework.

Table 3 presents the measurement model results. All indicator loadings exceeded 0.70 (with one exception: ATD2 = 0.715, which remained acceptable given the construct-level metrics), and all constructs met recommended thresholds for CR, rho_A, and AVE (Fauzi, 2022; Aburumman et al., 2022).

Table 3: Assessment of Measurement Model

Items	Loadings	CR	rho_A	AVE
Attitude (ATD)		0.874	0.883	0.668
ATD1: I believe that using social media to share BDS information is valuable to me	0.869			
ATD2: It is impossible for me to consistently use social media to share information on BDS (R)	0.715			
ATD3: The practice of using social media to share BDS information is a good idea	0.874			
ATD4: The practice of using social media to share information on BDS is challenging (R)	0.849			
ATD5: The practice of using social media to share information on BDS is going to benefit me	0.767			
Social Norms (SN)		0.924	0.929	0.771
SN1: I frequently use social media to share BDS information	0.773			
SN2: I find social media helpful in understanding complex topics on BDS	0.916			
SN3: I prefer social media compared to other information-sharing methods on BDS	0.945			
SN4: I feel comfortable using social media to learn about BDS	0.891			
SN5: I would recommend social media for others to learn about BDS	0.856			
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)		0.899	0.904	0.716
PBC1: I am confident that I can use social media effectively to share information on BDS	0.789			
PBC2: It will entirely be up to me whether I want to use social media to share information on BDS	0.866			
PBC3: My ability to use social media to share information on BDS would demand more planning time (R)	0.931			
PBC4: If I wanted to, I could easily navigate through social media to find information on BDS	0.824			
PBC5: If required to use social media to share BDS information, it would feel more difficult (R)	0.813			

Behavioural Intention (BI)		0.951	0.953	0.748
BI1: I intend to share knowledge through social media about BDS	0.850			
BI2: I plan to share information on BDS through social media	0.800			
BI3: I will try to share information on BDS through social media	0.919			
BI4: I am willing to use social media frequently to convey BDS information	0.890			
BI5: I am willing to explore more information on BDS	0.821			
BI6: I believe I can effectively use social media for deeper understanding on BDS	0.849			
BI7: I intend to use social media as a primary learning tool on BDS	0.915			
BI8: I intend to recommend social media for sharing BDS information to others	0.868			

Note: (R) = reverse-coded item; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

The HTMT model was applied to examine the correlations between variables to confirm the transparency of discriminant validity among each variable as part of the study. Rönkkö and Cho (2020) stated that the value of variables should not exceed 0.90 to indicate the establishment of discriminant validity. The acceptance value range for assembling discriminant validity is less than 0.70, with a maximum acceptable threshold of 0.90 (Cheung et al., 2023). Table 4 shows the results of assessing the model’s discriminant validity, proving that the study’s framework meets the discriminant validity requirements and proves the discriminant validity of the model. As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values fell below the 0.90 threshold (Rönkkö & Cho, 2020; Cheung et al., 2023). The Attitude–BI value (0.897) approached the threshold; researchers should note this in future instrument refinement.

Table 4: Discriminant validity assessment (HTMT Criterion)

Construct	Attitude	PBC	Social Norms	BI
Attitude	—			
PBC	0.758	—		
Social Norms	0.832	0.684	—	
Users' Intention (BI)	0.897*	0.729	0.827	—

Note: * HTMT value approaches 0.90 threshold; monitor in future studies.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

i) PLS-SEM: Assessment of Structural Model

Several measurements were used to assess the structural model of the study: the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to assess the multicollinearity and R-square values. According to Kyriazos and Poga (2023), multicollinearity tests play a vital role in ensuring the reliability of the relationships between variables. Ahmad (2021) suggests that the VIF value should not exceed 10 to avoid serious multicollinearity issues. In this study, all the constructs’ VIF values range from 2.388 to 4.984, indicating multicollinearity is within the applicable limits. Furthermore, figure 2 demonstrates the R-square values for the dependent variable, the intention to use social media

for BDS information sharing, which is 0.944. The outcome of the R-square value of the model can declare that the study has substantial predictive power in the sample. The value range for R-square from 0-1 shows that the outcome is significant and has greater explanatory power (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021).

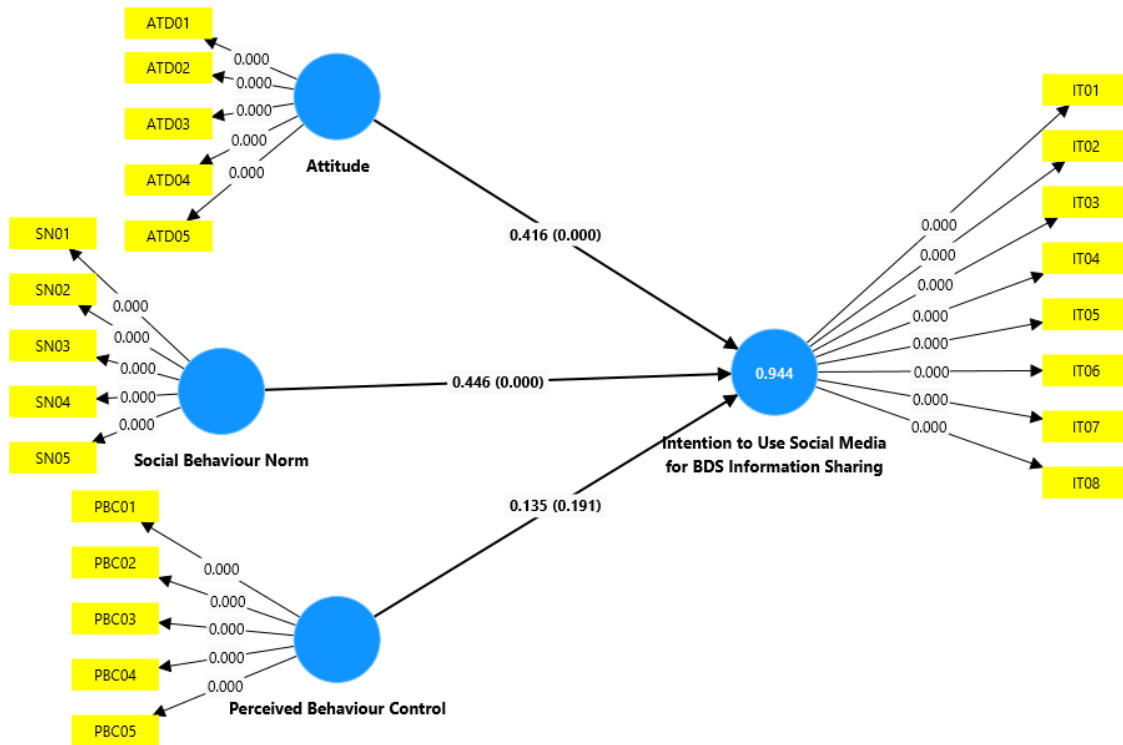


Figure 2: Structural model

ii) Testing Results

The hypotheses were tested by applying bootstrapping methods with t-values and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals to emphasise the actual effect or relationship between the independent variables toward the dependent variable (Tibbe & Montoya, 2022). According to the assessment view, the hypothesis will only be supported when the t-value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 (Alazab et al., 2020). Table 5 shows the results of the hypothesis analysis after using the bootstrapping approach. The attitude (H1) and perceived behaviour control (H3) variables have t-values greater than 1.96, indicating the establishment (support) of the hypothesis. However, the social behaviour norm (H2) variable has a t-value below 1.96 at the 0.05 consequence level, signifying that the hypothesis cannot be established.

Table 5: Structural model and hypothesis testing results

H	Path	β	M	SD	T-stat	p-value	95% CI	Supported
H1	ATD → BI	0.416	0.407	0.087	4.761	< 0.001	[0.245, 0.587]	YES
H2	SN → BI	0.135	0.147	0.103	1.306	0.192	[-0.067, 0.337]	NO
H3	PBC → BI	0.446	0.443	0.047	9.562	< 0.001	[0.354, 0.538]	YES

Note: β = standardised path coefficient; M = bootstrap mean; SD = standard deviation; CI = bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence interval; n.s. = not significant.

H1 was supported: attitude positively and significantly predicted sharing intention ($\beta = 0.416$, $T = 4.761$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.245, 0.587]). H2 was not supported: social norms did not significantly predict intention ($\beta = 0.135$, $T = 1.306$, $p = 0.192$; 95% CI [-0.067, 0.337]), with the confidence interval crossing zero. H3 was supported: perceived behavioural control was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.446$, $T = 9.562$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.354, 0.538]).

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

i) Attitude (H1 Supported)

The significant positive attitude–intention relationship ($\beta = 0.416$, $p < 0.001$) is consistent with the extensive TPB literature establishing attitude as a robust behavioural predictor (Ajzen, 2020; Bosnjak et al., 2020). In the Malaysian context, this relationship is amplified by the cultural and religious alignment between BDS activism and Islamic values of justice, solidarity, and social responsibility (Muhamad et al., 2022). Students who evaluate BDS information sharing as meaningful and value-congruent are significantly more likely to intend to act, reflecting attitude-driven rather than norm-driven behaviour characteristic of politically charged issues (Lee & Kim, 2019).

ii) Social Norms (H2 Not Supported)

The non-significance of social norms ($\beta = 0.135$, $p = 0.192$) suggests that when moral conviction is strong, perceived social pressure plays a secondary role, a pattern documented for politically sensitive behaviours (Lee & Kim, 2019). Additionally, the measurement approach predominantly captured *descriptive* rather than *injunctive* norms, potentially reducing the construct's predictive sensitivity. Future research should separate these two normative dimensions (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

iii) Perceived Behavioural Control (H3 Supported)

PBC emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with Generation Z's digital fluency. Students who feel confident in finding, evaluating, and sharing BDS content and who regard the act as volitional and technically accessible are most strongly disposed to intend to share. Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy framework explains this: observing peers share BDS content reinforces students' own capability beliefs, while the technical ease of sharing (reposting, forwarding) substantially lowers perceived barriers (Muliadi et al., 2022; Verduyn et al., 2021).

Theoretical Implications

This study validates TPB within a novel geopolitically charged social media context, extending its documented scope to deliberate BDS information sharing. The differential performance of TPB constructs — with PBC as dominant predictor and social norms non-significant — enriches debates on the relative primacy of attitudinal, normative, and control pathways in digital activism. The near-threshold Attitude–BI HTMT value (0.897) raises questions about discriminant validity that future instrument development should address.

Practical Implications

The prominence of attitude suggests that BDS campaigns should focus on reinforcing favourable attitudinal appraisals through educational storytelling, Palestinian testimony, and documented impact evidence (e.g., divestment victories). The dominance of PBC further implies that campaigns should emphasise accessibility: clear calls to action, shareable content templates, and step-by-step guides lower perceived barriers to participation. For educators, integrating critical digital literacy and global citizenship content into curricula can simultaneously build PBC and deepen attitudinal foundations for informed activism (Jalli, 2025).

Limitations

i) Sampling

The sample is confined to Klang Valley university students — a geographically, educationally, and demographically bounded group. Overrepresentation of private university students (59.3%) and females (54.6%) may introduce selection bias. All findings pertain to this specific subpopulation and should not be generalised to Malaysian youth at large without cross-regional replication.

ii) Self-Report Bias

Self-administered questionnaires are susceptible to social desirability bias, particularly given BDS's political and religious salience in Malaysia. Future studies should complement survey data with digital trace data or behavioural observation (Ohme et al., 2024).

iii) Construct Validity

Social Norms items operationalised descriptive rather than injunctive norms, potentially misrepresenting TPB's subjective norm construct. The near-threshold HTMT value between Attitude and BI (0.897) warrants item refinement in future studies.

iv) Cross-sectional Design

The study cannot assess whether stated intentions translate into actual sharing behaviour. Longitudinal designs would provide stronger evidence of the intention–behaviour relationship.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies should extend sampling to diverse geographic and demographic populations and conduct cross-national comparisons. Separate operationalisation of injunctive and descriptive norms is recommended. Incorporating moral norms, platform-specific affordances, and digital self-efficacy as additional constructs, alongside longitudinal or experimental designs with actual behaviour as the outcome, would substantially advance this line of inquiry.

Overall, the findings are consistent with extensive TPB literature demonstrating that attitude is one of the most robust predictors of behavioural intention across diverse contexts (Ajzen, 2020; Bosnjak et al., 2020). Students who hold favourable attitudes toward the BDS movement and believe that sharing related information on social media is meaningful, impactful, and aligned with their values are significantly more likely to intend to engage in this behaviour. Furthermore, the cultural and religious context of Malaysia, a Muslim-majority nation with historically strong solidarity with the Palestinian cause, likely amplifies the relationship between

attitude and intention. Students who view the BDS movement favourably are not acting in isolation but are drawing upon deeply rooted cultural narratives of Muslim solidarity, anti-colonialism, and social justice that resonate in Malaysian society. This finding echoes research by Muhamad et al. (2022), which demonstrated that Malaysian youth's attitudes toward ethical consumption and boycotting are shaped by Islamic values and perceptions of social responsibility. This interpretation aligns with research suggesting that for politically charged or controversial issues, individuals often engage in attitude-driven rather than norm-driven behaviors (Lee & Kim, 2019).

Operationalising social norms in TPB studies can be challenging. It is possible that the items used in this study did not fully capture the nuanced ways in which students perceive and respond to social pressures related to BDS activism. Future research might benefit from distinguishing between injunctive norms (what others think one should do) and descriptive norms (what others are actually doing), as these dimensions can have differential effects on behavioural intention.

The significance of perceived behavioural control in this study can be understood through the lens of Generation Z's digital literacy and platform familiarity. As digital natives, the students in this sample have grown up using social media for communication, entertainment, and, increasingly, for information consumption and civic engagement (Astari et al., 2024; Panagiotou et al., 2022). Moreover, the technical ease of sharing content on social media platforms—through simple actions like reposting, retweeting, or sharing stories—lowers the barrier to entry for digital activism. Unlike traditional forms of activism that may require physical presence, organisational involvement, or specialised knowledge, social media information sharing is highly accessible. Students with high perceived behavioural control recognise this accessibility and feel empowered to participate in the BDS movement through their online activities.

The finding also resonates with research on information sharing behaviours among Malaysian students. Muliadi et al. (2022) demonstrated that social capital and trust play significant roles in students' information sharing on social media, both of which are underpinned by a sense of control and competence in digital communication. Students who feel confident in their ability to evaluate the credibility of BDS-related information, craft persuasive messages, and navigate potential social consequences are more likely to translate their pro-BDS attitudes into concrete sharing intentions.

Further to this, the findings highlight the importance of digital literacy and critical media consumption in shaping students' engagement with global issues. Educators can foster informed activism by teaching students how to evaluate the credibility of information, recognise biases in media coverage, and engage in respectful dialogue across differing viewpoints. Incorporating discussions of contemporary social movements like BDS into curricula can help students develop nuanced understandings of international conflicts and the role of consumer activism in advancing human rights.

For social media platforms, the study continues to underscore their central role as conduits for political information and activism. Platform designers and content moderators should be mindful of the ways in which algorithmic curation, content moderation policies, and platform affordances shape users' exposure to diverse perspectives and their ability to engage in meaningful discourse. Efforts to suppress or censor BDS-related content—as has been

documented in some contexts (Mansour, 2022)—can undermine democratic participation and limit users' perceived behavioural control.

CONCLUSION

This study applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour to examine Malaysian university students' intention to share BDS information on social media, analysing data from 403 respondents via PLS-SEM. Attitude and perceived behavioural control emerged as significant positive predictors, while social norms did not. The dominance of PBC reflects Generation Z's digital fluency and the accessibility of social media sharing tools, while strong attitude–intention effects reflect the cultural and moral salience of the Palestinian cause in Malaysia. These findings contribute theoretical validation of TPB in digital activism research and yield practical guidance for BDS campaign designers and educators — subject to the important caveat that results are bounded by the specificity of the university student sample in Malaysia's Klang Valley and should not be generalised without further replication. The reliance on social media for BDS information has important implications. On one hand, it enables rapid dissemination of awareness campaigns, grassroots mobilisation, and real-time updates on the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The visual and narrative-driven content prevalent on platforms like Instagram and TikTok can be particularly effective in conveying the urgency and emotional weight of the Palestinian struggle, thereby strengthening students' attitudes and intentions. On the other hand, the algorithmic curation of content on these platforms can create echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives, potentially polarising attitudes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Department of Communication Science, Universitas Brawijaya of Malang, Indonesia, for their support of academic collaboration and research on advertising, branding and marketing (NO.53/UN 10.F11/1A/2025).

BIODATA

Dr. Tan Poh Ling is a Senior Lecturer at Sunway University Malaysia. She earned her doctorate from Universiti Sains Malaysia, focusing on communication. Her academic background includes both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in public relations and environmental communication. Her research interests include corporate branding and marketing, strategic communication, tourism branding and communication. Email: pohlingt@sunway.edu.my

Dr. Nurzihan Hassim is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Research in Media & Communication (MENTION), Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia. Her research interests include social marketing, cultural and new media studies. Email: nurzihan@ukm.edu.my

Dickson Roger Marklen is currently a Master's degree student majoring in Communication and Culture at Xiamen University Malaysia. His research interests include visual and branding identity, consumer behaviour, and social media communication. Email: dicksonlimm@gmail.com

Azizun Kurnia Illahi, S.I.Kom, M.A. is the Head of the Department of Communication Science at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia. Her academic focus and research interests include health communication, social change, and social disparities. Email: azizun.nia@ub.ac.id

Diyah Ayu Amalia Avina, SE, M.Si. is the Head of the Undergraduate Study Program in Communication Science at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia. Her research interests include social marketing, branding, advertising, and social change. Email: d_avina@ub.ac.id

REFERENCES

- Abidin, C., & Gwynne, J. (2017). Entrepreneurial selves, feminine corporeality and lifestyle blogging in Singapore. *Asian Journal of Social Science, 45*(4/5), 385–408. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44508093>
- Aburumman, O. J., Omar, K., Shbail, M. A., & Aldoghan, M. (2022). How to deal with the results of PLS-SEM? In Alareeni, B., Hamdan, A. (Eds.) *Explore business, technology opportunities and challenges after the Covid-19 Pandemic* (Vol. 495, pp. 1196–1206). CBT 2022, Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems. Springer. <https://doi.org/g4jsct>
- Abunimah, A. (2020). Social media and Palestinian resistance. In M. Ronchi & S. Zeydanlioglu (Eds.), *The Kurdish question revisited* (pp. 307–322). Lexington Books.
- Ahmad, A. U. (2021). A study of multicollinearity detection and rectification under missing values. *Türk Bilgisayar ve Matematik Eğitimi Dergisi, 12*(15), 399–418.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211.
- Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*(4), 665–683.
- Ajzen, I. (2020). The theory of planned behavior: Frequently asked questions. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 2*(4), 314–324. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.195>
- Alazab, M., Alhyari, S., Awajan, A., & Abdallah, A. B. (2020). Blockchain technology in supply chain management: An empirical study of the factors affecting user adoption/acceptance. *Cluster Computing, 24*(1), 83–101
- Astari, D. W., Nurussa'adah, E., & Apriliana, A. Q. (2024). The urgency of social media 'diet' for Generation Z. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication, 40*(3), 74–89.
- Awad, R. (2020). BDS as the baseline of solidarity: Toward a model of co-struggling with Palestinians in their movement for justice and liberation. *Human Geography, 14*, 362–373.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bartschat, M., Cziehso, G., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2021). Searching for word of mouth in the digital age: Determinants of consumers' uses of face-to-face information, internet opinion sites, and social media. *Journal of Business Research, 141*, 393–409.
- BDS Movement. (2025). Indicators of the BDS movement's global impact: July–December 2024. <https://bdsmovement.net/Indicators-BDS-Global-Impact-July-December-2024>
- Bosnjak, M., Ajzen, I., & Schmidt, P. (2020). The theory of planned behavior: Selected recent advances and applications. *Europe's Journal of Psychology, 16*(3), 352–356. <http://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v16i3.3107>
- Cheung, G. W., Cooper-Thomas, H. D., Lau, R. S., & Wang, L. C. (2023). Reporting reliability, convergent and discriminant validity with structural equation modeling: A review and best-practice recommendations. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 41*, 745–783. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-023-09871-y>
- Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social influence: Compliance and conformity. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55*, 591–621.

- Cohen, J. (1992). Statistical power analysis. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 1(3), 98-101.
- Erakat, N. (2019). The sovereign right to kill: A critical appraisal of Israel's shoot-to-kill policy in Gaza. *International Criminal Law Review*, 19(5), 783–818.
- Fauzi, M. A. (2022). Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) in knowledge management studies: Knowledge sharing in virtual communities. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning*, 14(1), 103–124.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019) When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31, 2-24. <https://doi.org/gfzk7g>
- Jalli, N. (2025). Viral justice: TikTok activism, misinformation, and the fight for social change in Southeast Asia. *Social Media + Society*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/qxs6>
- Jost, J., Barberá, P., Bonneau, R., Langer, M., Metzger, M., Nagler, J., Sterling, J., & Tucker, J. (2018). How social media facilitates political protest: Information, motivation, and social networks. *Political Psychology*, 39, 85–118.
- Kwon, K. H., & Moon, S.-I. (2020). The influence of online social media on political participation: A study of South Korean university students. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 30(3–4), 151–170.
- Kyriazos, T., & Poga, M. (2023). Dealing with multicollinearity in factor analysis: The problem, detections, and solutions. *Open Journal of Statistics*, 13(3), 404–424.
- Lee, Y., & Kim, J. (2019). A meta-analysis of the relationship between social media use and political participation: The moderating role of political efficacy. *Mass Communication and Society*, 22(4), 425–446.
- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. (2024). *Internet users survey 2022*. Cyberjaya: MCMC.
- Mansour, E. (2022). Social media censorship and digital resistance among Palestinian voices online. *Journal of Information Science*, 48(5), 611–629.
- Marklen, D. R., Tan, P. L., & Hassim, N. (2025). Instagram influencers' source credibility on gadget product purchase intention among Indonesian Generation Z: The mediating role of parasocial interaction. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 41(1), 1–22.
- Morrison, S. (2020). Whither the state? The Oslo peace process and neoliberal configurations of Palestine. *Social Science Quarterly*, 101(7), 2465–2484.
- Muhamad, N., Ilham-Wahab, A., & Othman, A. K. (2022). Understanding Malaysian Muslim consumers' intention to boycott Israeli products. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 13(4), 912–929.
- Muliadi, M., Muhammadiyah, M., Amin, K. F., Kaharuddin, K., Junaidi, J., Pratiwi, B. I., & Fitriani, F. (2022). The information sharing among students on social media: The role of social capital and trust. *VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, 54(4), 823–840.
- Nordin, N. (2025). Understanding behavioral patterns of social media usage among university students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Information Technology and Multimedia*, 14(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.17576/apjitm-2025-1401-07>

- Ohme, J., Araujo, T., Boeschoten, L., Freelon, D., Ram, N., Reeves, B. B., & Robinson, T. N. (2024). Digital trace data collection for social media effects research: APIs, data donation, and (screen) tracking. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 18(2), 124–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19312458.2023.2181319>
- Ostrowski, M. (2020). BDS and the challenge to academic freedom. *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(4), 1132–1144.
- Panagiotou, N., Lazou, C., & Baliou, A. (2022). Generation Z: Media consumption and MIL. *Imgelem*, 6(11), 455–476.
- Park, C. S., & Yang, Y. (2021). Social media and political participation: How social media use strengthens political engagement through information seeking and political discussion. *Digital Journalism*, 9(8), 1115–1136.
- Purwanto, A., & Sudargini, Y. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis for social and management research: A literature review. *Journal of Industrial Engineering & Management Research*, 2(4), 114–123.
- Rosenfeld, J. (2025, December 4). Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS). *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions>
- Rönkkö, M., & Cho, E. (2020). An updated guideline for assessing discriminant validity. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(1), 6–14.
- Shin, D.H., & Hwang, Y. (2020). Social media information sharing and its effect on attitude toward Political participation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 107, 106268.
- Singh, S. (2021). *The second partition of Palestine: Hamas–Fatah struggle for power*. Routledge India.
- Schaefer, A. (2026, March 19). How Gen Z uses social media and what that means for brands. *Sprout Social*. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/gen-z-social-media/>
- Slotta, D. (2025, Dec 17). Social media and Generation Z in the United States: Statistics & facts. *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/topics/10943/social-media-and-generation-z-in-the-united-states/>
- Steinberg, G. M. (2023). BDS and antisemitism: Analysis of current trends. *Israel Affairs*, 29(1), 45–68.
- Suk, J., Abhishek, A., Zhang, Y., Ahn, S. Y., Correa, T., Garlough, C., & Shah, D. V. (2022). #EndSARS: Social media, digital activism, and the global diffusion of protest. *New Media & Society*, 24(11), 2597–2614.
- Tibbe, T. D., & Montoya, A. K. (2022). Correcting the bias correction for the bootstrap confidence interval in mediation analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/qxs5>
- UNRWA. (2026, January 7). UNRWA Situation Report #203 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-203-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>
- USCPR. (2025). US BDS victories. <https://uscpr.org/activist-resource/boycott-divestment-and-sanctions/bdswins/>
- Verduyn, P., Schulte-Strathaus, J. C. C., Kross, E., & Hülshager, U. R. (2021). When do smartphones displace face-to-face interactions and what to do about it? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 114, 106550.

- Yusof, Y., Zulkifli, N., & Wahab, S. A. (2021). Digital activism and social media use among Malaysian youth: Motivations and barriers. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 37(3), 224–241.
- Zeitzoff, T. (2023). Social media and political conflict: New data, new challenges. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 11(1), 209–216.