

Online Food Shopping Motives during COVID-19 Pandemic for Improving Behavioural Intention: Conceptual Model and Propositions

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected online shopping patterns and accelerated the adoption of online shopping and home deliveries. Online food delivery systems and applications have transformed the way consumers order and consume food, especially during the Movement Control Order by the government during the Covid-19 pandemic. Restaurants and mobility agents such as FoodPanda and GrabFood were heavily reliant on mobile technology during the pandemic to strengthen online essentials from offline services which increased online consumers as well. This study designed the drivers on online food shopping motives towards consumer behaviour intentions among online food delivery customers in

Malaysia. Grounded from various streams of literature and scholarly views, this research develops a conceptual model describing the drivers of online food shopping through the propositions of the model utilising Theory of Planned Behaviour and Technology Acceptance Model. Hence, the study also provides a literature overview of the current issue on the pandemic situation on e-commerce and online ordering services in Malaysia as well as discussion and direction for further research.

Keywords

Behavioural Intention, Online Shopping Motives, Covid-19 Pandemic, Online Food Delivery.

Introduction

The coronavirus disease, or Covid-19, is currently taking our world by storm. The novel respiratory and infectious disease has sickened millions and killed 3.75 million people around the world, and it does not seem to be slowing (Grashuis et al., 2020). The spread of the Covid-19 epidemic has affected businesses around the world; a number of large companies have had negative impacts including the closure of manufacturing plants, stores becoming empty without customers, and a drastic drop in demand for goods. (Koch et al., 2020). As Covid-19 spreads around the world and consumers change their buying habits, it is more important than ever to fully understand the market.

Thus nowadays, e-commerce has become the main method of consumption amid the economic downturn due to concerns about the rapid spread of Covid-19. E-commerce is a major distribution channel covering 13.2% of the global retail market (Bhatti et al., 2020). The development of secure and convenient payment systems through advances in information and communication technology, and the proliferation of smartphones have led to the growth of e-commerce. With the spread of Covid-19, e-commerce has gained popularity as a major shopping tool. As consumers with limited access to offline shopping, they are turning to online shopping. The number of e-commerce orders has soared, and despite the economic downturn, companies are doing relatively well.

According to Gagua, (2020), the local e-commerce market is estimated to continue to grow at an annual average rate of 14.3% in the Malaysia e-commerce market over the next five years. By 2024, the retail market share after the Covid-19 pandemic is expected to reach 19.4%, and e-commerce growth is expected to increase in tandem with non-face-to-face adoption.

E-commerce systems are known today as new services such as food delivery, online shopping applications, and restaurant delivery. The number of online purchases increased during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to offline transactions, which came from older consumers. Additionally, many online retailers began to develop new product recommendations and sales strategies because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which may result in unintentional tax liabilities that they have not experienced before (Butu et al., 2020). Dissemination of Covid-19 is a basic restriction of traditional face-to-face use. This has shocked the secondary market, and online conversions are desperately needed for customers and businesses. The changes seen in the e-commerce market are expected to continue even after the Covid-19 pandemic ends.

For e-commerce, customer service is very important. It is important to provide value to customers in an unprecedented time like this in order to maintain consistency, flexibility, and reduce the likelihood of Covid-19 effects (Prasetyo et al., 2021). Some of the ways e-commerce companies can optimize customer intimacy in a pandemic value chain are to be more responsive to customers, for example on social media, phone, or live chat. Online purchases that come with delivery tracking packages are one way to optimize intermediaries in the value chain. These services have caused a reactive action by courier services companies to update notifications and alerts to customers about their shipments. Most of these courier companies offer free or discounted shipping rates and promise next-day delivery.

Furthermore, e-commerce has also increased buyers in developed countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Pakistan. However, the research on e-commerce studies with the Covid-19 pandemic is still current and there is a lack of research and a gap that needs to be filled (Ali et al., 2021). According to Davis and Toney (2021), Covid-19 has a significant impact on e-commerce, with 84.8% of consumer open-mindedness having observed an increase in customers' openness to new digital offerings in 2021. Rapid delivery and accurate product tracking are possible due to the expansion of road networks and the development of logistics infrastructure.

The volume of online orders experienced a surge as this became possible. Thus, a complete understanding of how shopping attitudes influence online buying behaviour can help marketers in their quest to penetrate any market (Ma et al., 2021). This approach is widely used by researchers and practitioners to compare online shopping behaviours across Malaysia.

The theory of planned behaviour has been widely used in previous studies in the context of online shopping applications such as restaurant apps, food delivery apps, etc. Research shows that the theory of planned behaviour can predict attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control toward the behavioural intention of fast food consumption. In addition, in order to examine the influence of attitude and behavioural intention of customers towards online shopping applications, Yeo et al. (2017) has examined factors such as convenience motivation and post usage usefulness by utilizing the TPB which includes few important variables namely prior online purchase, hedonic motivation, price saving orientation, and time-saving orientation.

Although there are existing studies on online shopping motives against behavioural intentions through online shopping applications (Ali et al., 2021; Amirtha et al., 2021), there is a significant lack of studies to address food delivery services in the current light of Covid-19 outbreaks in Malaysia. It is important to study further online shopping applications in the context of food delivery services implemented during the Covid-19 outbreak in Malaysia.

This conceptual study is driven by the challenge posed by Ali et al. (2021), for online shopping motives that impact the behavioural intention amongst online customers in the context of online food delivery during pandemic Covid-19 in Malaysia. The paper begins with a brief review of the theory of planned behaviour, technology acceptance model, and literature on factors affecting online shopping motives, followed by the behavioural intentions model. Then, a series of research propositions will be discussed in the next section. The paper concludes with a general discussion of the key issues that have arisen and recommendations for further research.

Conceptual Model and Propositions Development

Context of Investigation

Online ordering was commonly adopted by online customers for purchasing food especially during movement control orders in the new norm not only in Malaysia but in other developing countries. Prasetyo et al., (2021) defined online food delivery as transactions that have been done using mobile or any handheld device for ordering food such as handphone and computer. The Covid-19 pandemic has spurred the growth of the online food delivery service industry, and among all Internet services, online food delivery is considered one of the most useful. New business models related to food delivery services are also expected to grow.

The Malaysian online food delivery market is expected to grow at a CAGR of more than 19.2% during the forecast period. The market has been driven by the rising per capita income in Malaysia, increased consumer willingness to buy quality products, and continued food demand. In addition, raising people's awareness and changing people's lifestyles have supported the market growth. On the other hand, the lack of service in some restaurants and shops will hinder the growth of the market in the country.

Moreover, the Malaysia online food delivery market is expected to reach over USD319.1 million by 2026 (Acumen, 2020). Online food delivery is a service that allows customers to order food from any food store they want over the Internet. This was previously done by placing an order with the help of a website or using a mobile phone application. The introduction of online food delivery systems has transformed the online delivery sector, making it easier to operate with more continents. The online food delivery system has been adopted all over the world and its performance is quite good.

Online shopping is generally different from traditional retail environments (Koch et al., 2020; Zaidi et al., 2015). The basic elements of customer satisfaction are expected to vary from an online environment to an offline environment. Vinish et al. (2021) discussed the determinants of food ordering services, including website design, quality, security, information quality, payment systems, food and service quality, delivery, and customer service.

Online food ordering can provide customers with clear benefits such as simplicity and ease of shopping, fast and comprehensive product search capabilities, price comparison, real-time monitoring, payment flexibility, loyalty benefits, prompt delivery, and active customer support (Ali et al., 2021).

Globally, restaurant traffic is down 83% year on year. This is because closures can force the government to close restaurants or consumers may not want to visit the restaurant due to health problems. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be a significant situational effect influencing consumer behaviour towards online food delivery services.

Previous studies have generally investigated consumer behaviour associated with online services thus contributing to limited studies on the experience of consumers during online shopping especially related to food delivery services (Yeo et al., 2017). Also, studies by Yeo et al. (2017), and Prabowo and Nugroho (2019) were limited to certain age groups with small sample sizes. Additionally, Kaur et al. (2020) proposed further research on online food delivery services, involving aggregators from various regions.

Theory of Planned Behaviour and Technology Acceptance Model

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) heavily relies on a prior theory known as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The TRA model believes that consumers' purchase intentions are affected by two factors. One is that consumers have a co-cognitive attitude towards purchasing a certain product, and the second is that consumers cater to the habits of the whole society or their own group. However, the theory of planned behaviour accurately predicts behaviour, where people's control over their behaviour must exist. It is an important theory that believes that behavioural intentions are the direct decisive factor of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); therefore, studying behavioural intention of food delivery services can predict the motives related to food online shopping in the phase of Covid-19.

At present, five related studies have applied the TPB to explore online shopping motives intentions (Sussman & Gifford, 2019), indicating the rationale for planning behaviour. Based on the TPB, there are three factors of attitude, subjective and perceived behavioural control together with the intention which will influence the actual behaviour. The study by Hidayanto et al. (2012) applied two factors of TPB that were proposed by Ajzen (1991), namely attitude and perceived behavioural control to support their research which have a positive relationship with online purchase intention.

Moreover, the constructs of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control which are the components of TPB focused more on the normative aspects of organic food purchase intention. Thus, the study results indicated normative motives and hedonic motives as the main roles in organic purchase and consumption in sustainable food consumption.

Furthermore, consumer decision-making and online shopping behaviour have led to a change in motives related to food online shopping in the phase of Covid-19. In particular, motives related to normative and hedonic antecedent towards behavioural intention were usually compared in most research in the area of consumer behaviour and also e-commerce (Van der Heijden, 2004). Thus, the normative motives focused on pro-social and pro-environmental consumption, while the hedonic motives offered a self-fulfilling benefit to the user (Van der Heijden, 2004). Normative motives values indicated behaving appropriately and conforming to social norms and rules (perspective of the generalized other), however, hedonic values focus on the benefits that customers gain during online purchasing, for example, the excitement and positive feelings (López et al., 2016). Therefore, Koch, et al., (2020) found that hedonic motivation was an important variable to predict customer intention for online purchasing. Additionally, the study also revealed

that reports from media which represent external normative pressures could impact consumer behaviour, however, pressures from close social networks such as friends and family members couldn't give the same result.

Hence, in order to investigate the acceptance and rejection of consumers towards information technology, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was introduced, derived from the adaptation of TRA (Davis et al., 1989). Venkatesh et al., (2003) has extended the model and proposed that behavioural intention could influence the use of system and technology which is affected by two important external factors namely perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU). Moreover, it is also the fact that behavioural intention influences actual behaviour.

This model has been tested by many kinds of research and the findings reported to this relationship. Perceived usefulness focused on effort saving on online purchasing provides effectiveness, better performance, and productivity. Perceived ease of use focused on the internal belief tied to the respondent's assessment of the online purchase. This research expands the theoretical assumptions based on the TAM to explore the factors affecting online shopping motives toward behaviour intention to food delivery services.

However, previous research does not imply that the model of online shopping motives dimensions toward behavioural intention remains unclear. Thus, this study will develop a model based on TPB constructs, namely normative motives and hedonic motives and TAM constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use toward behavioural intentions to food delivery services in the context of a pandemic. The next section discusses behavioural intentions and the components of online shopping motives in this study.

Behavioural Intentions

The motivation amount that a person has during a specific behaviour engagement shows their behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). Whenever a person completely has control of their behaviour, it is said that they have a strong behavioural intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Thus, it leads to intentional acts and being able to predict people's behaviour.

Some studies pointed out that in an ethical context if an individual's determination of a certain behaviour is correct, this means that the individual is more likely to engage in the behaviour; from the perspective of behavioural theory and to perform a certain behaviour (Tawafak et al., 2021). Several attempts have been made in the context of technology

adoption, high behavioural intention represents a person's high tendency to adopt the technology, which is a critical measurement of a successful adoption.

The stronger the intention of the behaviour, the higher the probability of engaging in the behaviour (Amirtha et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021). The research proposed the measurement of behavioural intention that can be used to predict the occurrence of actual behaviour and can be applied to the marketing market to predict consumer behaviour.

Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness (PU) is the concept that was introduced as one of the attributes related to the evaluation of management information systems more to individuals and specific systems. The degree of belief that the use of work promotes one's work performance is defined as how quickly a task can be done, how much can be achieved, how much can be improved, and how much productivity can be improved (Hamid et al., 2016).

From the context of online shopping studies, PU implied a perception that shopping performance would be increased as a result of online shopping activities. Rattanaburi & Vongurai (2021) defined PU as the measurement of job performance according to the faith that system usage of the person, thus considered as an important component, affected online shopping (Taufik & Hanafiah, 2019).

Clearly, customers adopt certain products based on their perception that the product brings value and usefulness (Aw et al., 2021). PU is also known for leading to efficient and convenience satisfaction, hence previous researches revealed that perceived evaluation will increase the recognized value which in turn strengthens PU in the distinct act of performance and behaviour to expand specific benefits (Rattanaburi & Vongurai, 2021; Taufik & Hanafiah, 2019). Consequently, the result indemnifies behaviour displayed, where a person is keen to be contented by conveying itself under specific circumstances.

Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use (PEU) is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from the effort (Taufik & Hanafiah, 2019). In simpler words, PEU explains individual perception associated with the adoption of a new system or technology without putting any effort and even no need to pay. In the context of this

study, PEU refers to the extent to which users believe in their continued use of online shopping apps to buy food online, thus reflecting the perception of convenient and easy interaction of e-commerce platforms while online shopping. This perception eventually leads to the willingness of consumers to learn more about web features and make continuous usage (Hamid et al., 2016).

Another study found that the use of technology is much easier to apply in improving people's perceptions (Cheema et al., 2013). Customers will prefer to buy and shopping online when customers easy to find products and interact with shopping websites. A study from Van der Heijden (2004) confirmed that perceived ease of use is an important factor for hedonic orientation. Users will prefer technology-based applications that have a more comprehensive website structure. Websites will be easier to use when customers can interact with the website.

Normative Motives

Normative motives are also known as normative influences and subjective norms which are usually assessed in the context of consumer behaviour studies (Koch et al., 2020). Normative influences are information about normative behaviour within a group that is perceived, on the part of the message recipient, as signalling behaviour that group members are expected to adopt. On the other hand, subjective norms derive internal and external components of behaviour. Specifically, close social networks such as family members and close friends are considered as internal components while advertising and media are known as external components (Koch et al., 2020).

In many cases, normative influence may be interpersonally communicated. For instance, a member of a given ethnic group may receive messages about typical behaviour for members of that ethnic group; a father might tell his child about how to act when around extended family members; or a workgroup might tell a newcomer that laptops are discouraged during meetings and that legal pads typically are used (Tamir et al., 2008). Whatever the specific instantiation, it is plausible that normative influence often comes from interpersonal sources.

Hedonic Motives

The concept of hedonic motives means more subjective and personal than utilitarian which could produces more joy and playfulness than completing tasks. The hedonic role of intangible product attributes indicates non-instrumental, experience, and effective value. The customer experience of the achievement of determinable goals becomes the

nature of hedonic value adventures. These motives reflect the shopping generated from the excitement and emotional potential of the customer.

In particular, hedonic motives assess how much consumers feel about online shopping and focusing on the fun of doing the activity in the shopping application. This motive is associated with intrinsic motivation which revealed internal benefits that customers enjoyed (Jung et al., 2021). As such, the hedonic value is relevant for consumers who love innovative and new-seeking behaviours during online shopping such as shopping for sustainable and green products as well as for online food delivery.

Childers et al., (2001) recommend on company value allow hedonic resources to give a more positive attitude among consumers. Furthermore, this makes them more willing to make an online purchase. This idea is more specific to online users where they can learn about the latest trends, offer to have fun, make it easier for them to interact with other online users and can always be entertained, etc. However, the company that set up this website should know about the aspects of hedonic motives clearly. In addition to the existing marketing strategy, the design and implementation of online marketing are more focused on the hedonic value to customers (López et al., 2016).

Findings from previous studies have shown that to determine effective hedonic motivation, it deserves special attention by improving user motivation and experience about a particular commercial website (López et al., 2016). While marketers are focusing more on hedonic aspects to meet customers' increasing desires for entertainment, academic research is lagging in investigating the hedonic side of consumers' evaluations of their consumption experience. The next section shows the development of a conceptual model of shopping motives toward behavioural intention and the proposition in this study.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of online shopping toward behavioural intention is illustrated in Figure 1. The discussion in this section summarises the model's constructs and proposed relationships between them. Details are fleshed out in the following section:

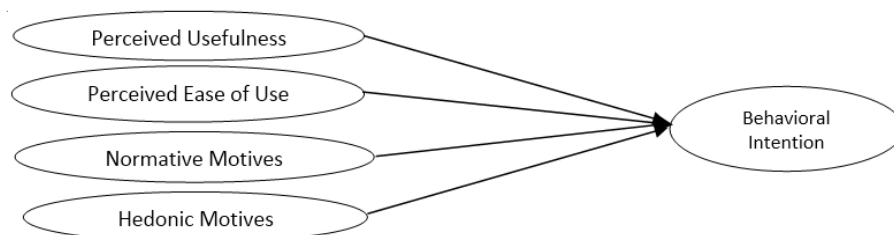


Figure 1 The conceptual model of online shopping motives toward the behavioural intention

Research Propositions

The proposition of Perceived Usefulness

Cheema et al. (2013) emphasized that a person will form certain behaviours when shopping online based on a thoughtful assessment of how they can improve their shopping performance. Previous studies showed that perceived usefulness positively influenced online shopping intentions. However, these online shopping sites offer an enjoyable experience to the customers, it contributes various benefits that are beneficial to their customers.

Additionally, referring to Zaidi et al., (2015), perceived usefulness is an important measure to customers who choose an online store and can increase customer satisfaction with the virtual store. This perceived usefulness also has a positive effect on online shopping attitudes through the findings of Hamid et al.'s (2016) study. Customers who regularly ease of use online shopping facilities are positively influenced by the online shopping facilities will realize their wants can be met and useful to them for online shopping.

A study conducted in Bangladesh by Rattanaburi and Vongurai (2021) found that perceived usefulness to be a major factor in influencing the use of e-commerce. Similarly, Kim and Kwahk (2007) claimed that through the intention to use e-commerce on behalf of perceived values, the perceived usefulness and emotions played significant roles in accounting for both the users. While a study investigated in Thailand by Navavongsathian et al. (2020) stated that the perceived usefulness had a direct influence on mobile banking acceptance. According to the above discussion, the recommended proposition is as below.

P1: Perceived usefulness positively influence behavioural intention to online purchasing during Covid-19 pandemic.

The Proposition of Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use positively influences attitude towards online shopping (Zaidi et al., 2015). Previous scholars also found that technology that is easy to use increases people's perception of usefulness. The findings from a study by Taufik and Hanafiah (2019) indicated a significant effect of perceived ease of use towards self-service technology. Another study by Amin et al. (2014) claimed that perceived ease of use demonstrates a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and customer satisfaction on the mobile website. In the agreement with the past study, Chen et al. (2014) also showed that

perceived ease of use is a strong determinant of perceived usefulness in the adoption of technological products. Furthermore, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness show a significant effect on the intention to use online shopping applications (Demoulin & Djelassi, 2016). Thus, the proposition was formed below:

P2: Perceived ease of use positively influence behavioural intention to online purchasing during Covid-19 pandemic.

The proposition of Normative Motives

Normative influences on behaviour are not explicitly covered by the social cognition model of health behaviour, with the exception of the theory of planned behaviour which includes the subjective norm construct and underlying normative belief (Conner & Norman, 2006). Wall et al. (2008) addressed this issue in the health domain, showing that personal norms moderated the intention–behaviour relationship. In the norm activation theory model, both personal-normative motives and awareness of consequences had significant effects on car-use intentions, but the effect of personal-normative motives was stronger. This is consistent with the proposal by Harland et al. (1999) where personal norms are the immediate antecedent of altruistic acts, and causal chain leading to pro-environmental behaviour.

These personal normative factors can influence a person’s behaviour when it is needed. It occurs in two situations, (a) when a person is aware of the behaviour for the welfare of others, and (b) when a person will choose to be responsible for himself. If these two conditions are met by a person, personal norms are essential and will engender a sense of responsibility for the behaviour (Harland et al., 1999). Hence, the proposition develops as:

P3: Normative motives positively influence behavioural intention to online purchasing during Covid-19 pandemic

The proposition of Hedonic Motives

Jung et al. (2021) indicated the finding of those who valued hedonic shopping behaviours clearly tended to have positive behavioural intentions. Similar to previous studies, Lopez, et al. (2016) found that hedonic values significantly influenced behavioural intentions. Customers’ perceived hedonic values both directly and indirectly influenced behavioural intentions. Additionally, the findings concerning values such as the value of an exciting life, enjoyment of life, and adventurous spirit, where it appears that hedonic values may be useful predictors of intention to purchase green products.

According to Shang et al. (2020), the behavioural findings demonstrated that compared to hedonic products, participants had a purchase intention bias towards utilitarian products. These findings provided a preliminary exploration of the mechanism of people's purchase decision of utilitarian products and hedonic products during online shopping festivals, positively contributing to marketing practices and future research. The experience for some users who refer to hedonic motives will look to a higher level of self that is perceived as a determinant of one's own perceived self-determination and escapism. The level of user satisfaction through this hedonic enjoyment can be measured by the way users think hedonically. Past studies illustrate that consumers use two values namely utilitarian and hedonic shopping when they shop online. In summary, this study aims to understand the role of hedonic motives by proposing that:

P4: Hedonic motives positively influence behavioural intention to online purchasing during Covid-19 pandemic.

Discussion and Direction for Further Research

This study attempted to augment the research on online shopping motives toward behaviour intention in the context of food delivery services during the Covid-19 pandemic. Given its online context, the study is important from the perspective where everything can be bought online today since scholars have argued that it is critical to understand the varied aspects of consumer engagement during online purchase behaviour. The study invoked the TPB and TAM theory to propose and answer two research questions. First is to address research question relates to the drivers of online shopping motives during a pandemic. This study undertook an extensive review of the literature and proposed a conceptual model representing the overall factors developed from both theories. The secondly, focusing on discussing the relationship between drivers of online shopping motives toward behavioural intention during pandemic Covid-19. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, even consumers who were sceptical about buying food online have been absorbed. This increases the possibility of expanding the market line and acts as an opportunity to improve negative perceptions.

This paper reviews the pandemic situation in online demand. For instance, in order to keep up with online ordering demands, Amazon and Instacart are creating large-scale jobs. As previously stated, the related market is expected to expand further, and for stable online shopping. It is expected that various efforts will continue to build one infrastructure and add novelty. Experts say that even after the pandemic Covid-19 outbreak subsides, consumers will continue to have permanent shopping habits that are expected to influence

the change (Koch et al., 2020). Also, due to the spread of Covid-19 in Malaysia, the situation is expected to be distorted, the online sales channel will be expanded and products suitable for new consumption methods should be noted.

In line with this conceptual study, this research focuses on specific issues for consumers who shop online. This study needs to be given in-depth attention and scrutiny in the context of the broader online shopping motives during the outbreak. Hence, this study listed further steps in order to complete this research based on the following strategy.

First, this study will expand the testing of empirical models, construct compositions, and collect available data sources. The empirical model proposed to be tested includes antecedents and results of food online shopping motives toward customer behaviour intention. This covers a deficient model in a limited scope on the factors of online shopping motives as discussed (P1 to P4) that are potential in future research. Second, testing for this empirical model will go through an empirical setting that can be proposed using cross-sectional data. At this stage, by testing the model in different ways using a longitudinal design that allows sufficient variation in a particular construct, it thus allows for the effect of the phenomenon to be reflected in the findings. For example, for the measurement of variables at different time points for hedonic constructs of motivation when there is sufficient variance.

Finally, the development and refinement of the model. The main effects of the study involve only the scope of the proposed conceptual model. Further studies include the refinement of the model by specifying the age and frequency of online shopping that might control these relationships between online shopping motives and behaviour intention constitutes a potential avenue for future research.

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