

# Intellectual Discourse

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Volume 30

Number 2

2022



**International Islamic University Malaysia**  
<https://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/id>

# *Intellectual Discourse*

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Volume 30

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*Intellectual Discourse* is a highly respected, academic refereed journal of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It is published twice a year by the IIUM Press, IIUM, and contains reflections, articles, research notes and review articles representing the disciplines, methods and viewpoints of the Muslim world.

*Intellectual Discourse* is abstracted in *SCOPUS*, *ProQuest*, *International Political Science Abstracts*, *Peace Research Abstracts Journal*, *Muslim World Book Review*, *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, *Index Islamicus*, *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, *ATLA Religion Database*, *MyCite*, *ISC* and *EBSCO*.

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

<https://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/id>

Email: [intdiscourse@iium.edu.my](mailto:intdiscourse@iium.edu.my); [intdiscourse@yahoo.com](mailto:intdiscourse@yahoo.com)

Published by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia  
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298  
Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

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# Understanding Factors Influencing Crime Prevention Information on Social Media

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**Mohamad Hafifi Jamri\*\*\*\***

**Abstract:** Despite increasing attention on social media and policing research in recent years, not many that focused specifically on source factors of message design and their perceived impact on crime prevention information. This present study aimed to address the gap, by investigating public perception towards crime prevention information posted by the authority on social media. A survey was carried out involving 400 active Malaysian users of social media in the age range of 18-34. The findings revealed that, interest in crime prevention information on social media was primarily motivated by information seeking and sharing. Videos, written texts and infographics were found to be the most preferred social media content. The public in general, perceived the authority's crime prevention information on social media positively. Out of the three different factors tested, credibility was found to be the significant predictor that can influence public's perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media. It was also found that, public perception can influence behavior intention to access and share crime prevention information on social media.

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**Keywords:** Social media, crime prevention, policing, message design, persuasion

**Abstrak:** Walaupun terdapat peningkatan perhatian terhadap kajian media sosial dan kepolisian, tidak banyak yang memfokuskan kepada faktor sumber rekabentuk mesej dan impaknya kepada informasi pencegahan jenayah. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menangani jurang sedia ada dengan meneliti persepsi publik mengenai informasi pencegahan jenayah yang dikongsikan oleh pihak berkuasa menerusi laman media sosial. Satu kaji selidik telah dijalankan dengan melibatkan seramai 400 orang pengguna aktif media sosial yang berumur dalam lingkungan 18-34 tahun. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan minat terhadap maklumat pencegahan jenayah dalam media sosial dimotivasikan oleh fungsi mencari dan berkongsi maklumat. Video, teks bertulis dan infografik adalah merupakan pengisian media sosial yang paling digemari. Persepsi awam terhadap informasi pencegahan jenayah yang dikongsikan pihak berkuasa menerusi media sosial adalah positif. Daripada tiga faktor utama yang diteliti, kredibiliti adalah merupakan faktor paling signifikan yang dapat mempengaruhi persepsi awam terhadap impak informasi pencegahan jenayah dalam media sosial. Kajian ini juga mendapati persepsi awam dapat mempengaruhi niat tingkah laku untuk mengakses dan berkongsi informasi pencegahan jenayah dalam media sosial.

**Kata kunci:** Media sosial, pencegahan jenayah, kepolisian, rekabentuk mesej, pemujukan

## Introduction

In recent times, social media has been widely used for crime prevention, still, its effectiveness remains unclear (Beshears, 2016; Fernandez, Dickinson & Alani, 2017). For instance, in Malaysia, the authority has adopted social media mainly to share public safety information, and as a mean for community engagement (Isa, 2015; Sinar, 2015). However, according to Ahmad and Ismail (2016), youth's perception towards the usage of social media for crime prevention in Malaysia was only moderate. This raises an important question; how effective is the authority's use of social media for crime prevention?

Today, social media is used to serve different functions, including for information seeking and sharing, communication, education and entertainment (Ismail, 2014; Ismail, 2020). Social media multifaceted

usage has made it ubiquitous in public's daily routine, thus, making it one of the best mediums to reach them. Recognising the high penetration rate of social media, particularly among the younger generation, police authorities worldwide are increasingly incorporating social media in communicating crime prevention information (SAS, 2015; Ahmad & Ismail, 2016).

Malaysians are among the highest users of social media in the Southeast Asia region (Bernama, 2019; Murugiah, 2020). According to the recent statistics, social media penetration in the country was over 80% (Kemp, 2020). This was influenced by a steady increase in internet penetration and mobile connection in Malaysia (Kemp, 2020). In 2020, it was reported that the internet penetration rate in the country was at 83%, while mobile connection recorded a staggering 127% of the population (Kemp, 2020). Although such high penetration rate offers wider reach, it also suggests greater user sophistication and expectation, due to increased exposure and experience in using the internet.

In the Malaysian context, social media can be effectively utilised to encourage public's participation in civic engagement activities, as well as, to build trust towards government institutions including the police force. This can take place through sharing of news, images, videos and links of social related issues (Warren, Sulaiman & Jaafar, 2014), which in a way, help to enhance community participation in policing practices (Sulaiman et al., 2014).

Similar to elsewhere, the Malaysian authority also embraces new technologies and has started utilising social media since the last decade. As of 2022, Facebook continued to be the main social media platform used by the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), with over 2.5 million followers. The RMP's Instagram account generated 480,000 followers, while on Twitter it had 181,500 followers. According to Salleh, Ekhwan and Salman (2019), the police force also uses WhatsApp messaging application to build relationship, promote interaction between police and the community and to combat crime.

Even though there has been increasing interest in studying crime prevention on social media, there has not been much emphasis on the message design aspects (Beshears, 2016; Fernandez et al., 2017). This gap has to be addressed to understand the characteristics that can help to make crime prevention information on social media more impactful.

Hence, in this study we first investigated the purpose for accessing crime prevention information on social media and preference of the types of content. Next, we examined public perception on the design of crime prevention information on social media. We also analysed the impact of crime prevention information based on the three factors which were, credibility, argument quality and attractiveness. Last, the study predicted users' behavioural intention based on the perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media.

### **Social media for crime prevention**

According to Hu and Lovrich (2019), police authority continues to experience difficulty in communicating with the public. The strategic usage of the social media has been suggested as one of the ways to facilitate the police in communicating with the public (Ruddell & Jones, 2013; Williams et al., 2018; Salleh et al., 2019). The police authority is increasingly using social media to share information related to crime, accident, criminal incidents and for community engagement (Boateng & Chenane, 2020). It not only helps them to improve communication with the public (Beshears, 2017) and promote public safety (Hu, Rodgers & Lovrich, 2018), but also allows gathering of security intelligence information (Fallik, Deuchar, Crichlow & Hodges, 2020).

However, effective social media usage for policing is not as easy as it seems. For instance, Crump (2012) reported that the police in the United Kingdom (UK) have been utilising the social media since 2008 to tap on to its potential to engage with the public. Yet, this proved to be difficult, due to the conservative police culture that hindered effective communication with the targeted public on social media (Crump, 2012). Based on past studies, it was argued that, advancement in new technologies have not significantly contributed to improved policing practices (Chan, 2003, Manning, 2008). According to Bullock (2018), utilising social media for policing is difficult due to lack of leadership and strategic guidance. A mismatch between the police culture and the social media culture also proves to be a barrier of effective usage of social media for policing (Dekker, Brink & Meijer, 2020).

While social media has without doubt redefines the way how police communicate with the public, it presents great challenges, including those that are related to police own integrity, reputation and effectiveness (Goldsmith, 2015). Police own reputation is at stake due to the high



visibility that is shown to the public on social media (Dekker et al., 2020). This, can negatively affect public perception towards the police. In addition, every communication form that police has on its social media account, is subjected to open records requests, investigation and litigation (Cruz, 2020).

Social media for policing has been both good and bad. The new media era has changed policing practices, as it provides opportunity for the police to construct its own narratives and to demonstrate to the public what it wishes, in a manner that has never happened before (Schneider, 2016). But this is not always a good thing, as there were occurrences in the past when the police wrongly presented itself to the public and had their social media policing strategy backfired (Ross, 2016).

In some instances, social media have failed to improve communication between the police authority and the public as how it is expected to do. This is contributed by the structural and cultural barriers experienced by both the police and the public such as, lack of technological infrastructure, digital inequalities, and ineffective technology mediated communication (Dekker et al., 2020).

Beyond adoption of social media, it is necessary for the authority to transform its organisational values and practices to ensure that the use of new technologies can be optimised for crime prevention purposes (Bullock, 2018). For instance, there are several strategies that the police can adopt with regard to their usage of social media, including the push strategy, a combination of push and pull strategy and the networking strategy (Meijer & Thaens, 2013). Since each of these strategies serve different purposes, it is important for the police to decide on its social media objectives before choosing the appropriate strategy. In addition, improved perception towards the police and increased engagement with the public on social media can be achieved through two-way asynchronous and synchronous interpersonal communication (Beshears, Beshears & Bond, 2019).

One of the most important criteria of sound social media usage for policing is to have a strategic plan that takes into consideration the message design aspects (Ruddell & Jones, 2013). Effective crime prevention information on social media should take into account demographic characteristics such as age, gender and education level (Ruddell & Jones, 2013). According to Tiry, Oglesby-Neal and Kim

(2019), police should also adopt a well-defined social media plan for crime prevention that is goal-oriented, with a proper weekly schedule, and uses a variety of media elements including images and video footages.

While social media for policing covers a wide range of themes such as communication and community relations, this study was carried out mainly on crime prevention. Specifically, our interest was on how the public perceived the authority's crime prevention information on social media.

### **Evaluating the impact of crime prevention information on social media**

In general, public acknowledges the important roles of social media for crime prevention (Israni, Erete & Smith, 2017). This, despite public concerns particularly pertaining to issues of privacy, social norms which relate to the way how people use the technology and misuse of information (Israni, et al., 2017). One of the main reasons why police authority continues to utilise social media is due to its unlimited potential to engage the public, particularly youth (Wright-Myrie et al., 2016).

However, information overload requires content creators to craft social media messages that stand out from the crowd, and more crucially, to be able to influence behavioural engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2014; Coursaris, Osch & Balogh, 2016; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). In relation to crime prevention, putting emphasis on the message design aspect can help to ensure that, the information gets the necessary attention from the public, and more importantly, achieve the intended objectives.

There are several factors that should be taken into consideration to ensure effective social media message design strategy for crime prevention. In regard of this study, three source factors in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) were employed to examine the effectiveness of crime prevention social media information. According to the literature, the three factors which are source credibility, argument quality and source attractiveness can influence public's reception of social media information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Kim & Benbasat, 2006; Yi, Yoon, Davis & Lee, 2013; Teng, Khong & Goh, 2014).

Source credibility is a crucial factor to determine the success of crime prevention media campaigns. According to Mendelsohn and

O’Keefe (1982), the public in general, evaluate the credibility of crime prevention sources based on expertise and trustworthiness. Cherney (2016) added, crime prevention information that originates from those with expertise and trustworthiness can help make communication more credible, persuasive and effective.

More importantly, messages that are perceived as being credible can influence public’s attitude and behavior (Cherney, 2016). In regard to social media, Li (2013) and Shah and Wei (2022) added, source credibility also can positively influence individuals’ perceived benefit of the information system. Hence, based on the source credibility factor, the following hypothesis was tested:

*H1: Source credibility has significant effect on perceived impact of crime prevention information.*

Argument quality is another important factor that can influence the effectiveness of crime prevention information on social media. According to O’Keefe and Jackson (1995), the quality of messages differs so as the level of persuasion, depending on the arguments provided. Based on the literature, it is evidenced that argument quality is an important factor that could influence persuasion and acceptance of social media information (Teng, Khong, Goh & Chong, 2014).

According to Chu and Kamal (2013), strong argument can have great impact on individuals’ attitude. Similarly, Ha and Ahn (2011) also argued that, the quality argument of a message may influence the information sharing behaviour on social media. Hence, based on the importance of the argument quality factor, the following hypothesis was tested:

*H2: Argument quality has significant effect on perceived impact of crime prevention information.*

Source attractiveness is also a crucial factor that could also influence the effectiveness of crime prevention information on social media. As an important source of message, attractiveness can be viewed based on different perspectives including physical and desirable features (Li & Yin, 2018). According to Smith and Houwer (2014), a message that is attractive and likeable is deemed to be impactful. Taking into consideration the source attractiveness factor, the following hypothesis was tested:

*H3: Source attractiveness has significant effect on perceived impact of crime prevention information.*

The basic premise in any communication process, is for the sender to be able to successfully deliver an intended message to the receiver (Keyton, 2011; Cheney, 2011). While the importance of social media is evidenced, organisations should emphasis on the message design aspect, to ensure that it is carefully planned and structured in order to achieve the intended impact (Agnes, 2012).

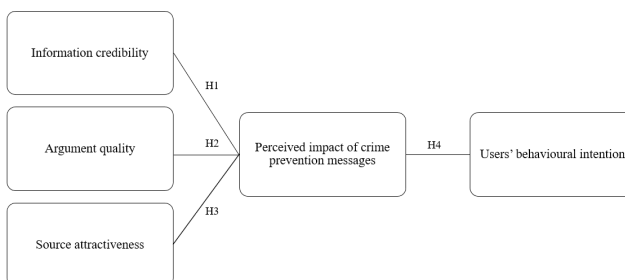
In this study, the impact of crime prevention information on social media refers to its effectiveness which is delivered through social media. This, according to Keshavarz (2021) and Sun (2021), takes into account users' own perceptions which are guided by different considerations including information source, presentation, credibility and decision-related.

Social media can be utilised effectively as a medium to promote positive behavioural change (Foster & Lawson, 2013; Laranjo, 2016; Simeon et al., 2020). This is evident in actions such as information sharing, likes and retweet (Simeon et al., 2020). Therefore, in regard to this study, we also analysed behavioural intention such as continuous access and sharing of information based on perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media. Hence, the following hypothesis was tested:

H4: The perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media has significant effect on users' behavioural intention.

Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework of the study based on the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the study



## **Research methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research approach due to its ability to reach and describe a huge population (Barbie, 1998). Specifically, a survey was administered to measure respondents' perception, preferences and the antecedent factors that can influence the impact of crime prevention information on social media.

### *The sample*

The survey was conducted online, involving 400 Malaysian respondents who were between the ages of 18-34. The decision to include respondents in this age category was made based on the literature (Mahadi, 2013; Ismail, 2014; Ahmad & Ismail, 2016; Anderson & Jiang, 2018), that reported, avid users of social media in Malaysia and elsewhere are mainly youth. Using sampling calculator, the sample size was deduced from over 33 million Malaysian populations, based on 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error.

This study, which was conducted as part of the main research project that aimed to theorise crime prevention on social media, adopted a convenience sampling technique. This sampling technique allowed any individual who fulfilled the criteria of the study to be recruited as respondent (Fricker, 2008). The convenience sampling technique was adequate for this study, as it meant to identify issues and provide theoretical underpinning related to effective usage of social media for crime prevention.

### *The instrument and the procedure*

The survey questionnaire instrument consisted of both categorical variables and continuous variables. The survey questionnaire instrument was adapted from past studies related to source factors, crime prevention and social media (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Chen & Lee, 2008; Cheung, Luo, Sia & Chen, 2009; Li & Suh, 2015; Cyr, Head, Lim & Stibe, 2018).

The unrestricted self-selected online survey (Fricker, 2008) was conducted for three months period, from January-March 2021. Respondents were recruited through advertisement on social media. Survey Monkey Social Media Collector helped to segment potential respondents based on the Malaysian nationality between the ages of 18-34. The survey was made open to the public to participate. Filter

questions was asked at the beginning of the survey to ensure that the respondents are Malaysians, aged 18-34 and have at least ONE (1) year of experience using any kind of social media.

The close ended survey questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Each respondent can only participate once in the survey. This was ensured through the technical setting of the online survey. Participation in this study was voluntary and respondents may decide to quit the study at any time before submitting their survey responses. Prior to the data collection, ethical approval was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

## **Findings and discussion**

### *Measures*

This study had four categorical variables – age, gender, social media experience and ethnicity; and five continuous variables – perceived impact, source credibility, argument quality, source attractiveness and users' behavioural intention. The categorical variables were numerically coded, while the continuous variables were measured based on the five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

Even though, in the beginning 400 respondents participated in this study, only 380 were included in the analysis. The excluded respondents did not fully complete the survey questionnaire.

### *Demographic characteristics*

The findings of the study showed that 56.6% of the respondents were in the 25-34 age category, while the remaining 43.4% of the respondents were between 18-24 years old. The study had more female respondents (65.5%) than male respondents (34.5%). In terms of their ethnicity, 61.6% of the respondents were Malay/indigenous, 28.2% Chinese, 7.4% Indian and the remaining 2.9% comprised of those from other ethnicities. This reflected the Malaysian population by ethnic groups (DOSM, 2021).

A huge percentage of the respondents (91.8%) reported that, they had more than 5 years of social media experience, 6.8% had between 3-4 years of experience and only 1.1% had 1-2 years of experience. This indicated that, most of the respondents have substantial experience

using social media. The demographic characteristics of this study is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-24	165	43.4
	25-34	215	56.6
Gender	Female	249	65.5
	Male	131	34.5
Social media experience	Less than 1 year	1	0.3
	1-2 years	4	1.1
	3-4 years	26	6.8
	More than 5 years	349	91.8
Ethnicity	Malay/ indigenous	234	61.6
	Chinese	107	28.2
	Indian	28	7.4
	Others	11	2.9
Total (N=380)			

*Purposes for accessing crime prevention information on social media*

The findings of this study indicated that the most important purpose for the respondents to access crime prevention information on social media was to get the latest information (53.9%). This was followed by other purposes including the urge to learn something new related to crime prevention (28.2%), to share information with family and friends (16.6%) and others (1.3%). This is shown in Table 2 below.

Proliferation of news and information on social media influences the public’s information seeking behavior, including those related to crime prevention (Ahmad & Ismail, 2016). This presents opportunity for the authority to take control of its own communication and to feed the public with the right crime prevention information. As explained by Davis,

Alves and Sklansky (2014), the power of publication and conversation provided by social media enables the authority to disseminate any information swiftly and to engage the public.

Table 2: Purposes for Accessing Crime Prevention Information on Social Media

<b>Purposes for accessing crime prevention information on social Media</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
To get the latest information related to crime prevention	205	53.9
To learn something new related to crime prevention	107	28.2
To share information with family and friends	63	16.6
Other	5	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

#### *Types of social media content preference*

In relation to the preferred types of crime prevention information content on social media, this study found that, video content was preferred the most (25.8%). This was followed by written content (24.5%), infographic content (22.9%), video story (11.1%), image (8.4%), external link (3.7%), live video (2.9%), contest (0.3%) and others (0.5%). This is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Preferred Types Social Media Content for Crime Prevention

<b>Preferred social media content</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Video	98	25.8
Written content	93	24.5
Infographic content	87	22.9
Video story	42	11.1
Image	32	8.4
Link to external content	14	3.7
Live video	11	2.9
Other	2	0.5



Preferred social media content	Frequency	Percent (%)
Contest	1	0.3
Total	380	100

The findings of this study suggested that, there was no one type of content that was superior over others. The fact that the respondents chose video, written and infographic content indicated preferences for both visual and verbal elements. It should be noted that, types of social media content preference are also influenced by users' personality traits (Mwaba, Saini & Abratt, 2017). Different messages which aim to invoke emotion or to provide mental stimulation may require different types of social media content (Mwaba et al., 2017). Hence, it is important for the authority to use variety of content types to ensure the effectiveness of crime prevention information on social media.

*Perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media*

This study found that, the respondents in general had a positive perception towards the impact of crime prevention information on social media (M = 3.80). Breakdown of findings revealed that, relevance of information recorded the highest score (M = 3.89), followed by reliability of information (M = 3.83) and accuracy of information (M = 3.69). This is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Perceived Impact of Crime Prevention Information on Social Media

Perceived impact	Mean	Std. Dev
Accuracy of information	3.69	0.781
Reliability of information	3.83	0.700
Relevance of information	3.89	0.654
Total (N=380)	3.80	0.620

Echoes Bayerl, Horton, Jacobs and Akhgar (2014) study on the importance of perceived trust or reliability of information, our findings also highlighted the need to focus on relevancy of crime prevention information on social media. As explained by Baloushi (2019), police should provide relevant information on social media to ensure genuine interest among the public. This is in line with expectation of the authority's utilisation of social media, which is to keep the public informed on crime related issues and public safety (Israni et al., 2017).

*Factors influencing perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media*

Utilising the three source factors posited by the ELM, this study investigated how source credibility, argument quality and source attractiveness have significant effect on perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media. Correlation and multiple linear regression analyses were carried out to predict relationship. This is summarised in Table 5-6 below.

Table 5: Correlations Analysis

<b>Correlations matrix of perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media and the source factors</b>				
Correlations	Classification			
	Perceived impact	Credibility	Argument quality	Attractiveness
Perceived impact	1.0			
Credibility	.576**	1.0		
Argument quality	.350**	.469	1.0	
Attractiveness	.261**	.333	.594	1.0

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Based on the findings of the correlations analysis conducted, it was evident that source credibility, argument quality and source attractiveness had significant positive relationship with perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media (Table 5). However, it should be noted that the strengths of relationship varied between weak and moderate. Source credibility recorded moderate positive correlation ( $r=0.576$ ), while argument quality ( $r=0.350$ ) and source attractiveness ( $r=0.261$ ) had weak positive correlations. It should be understood that, perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media can be influenced by various determining factors. Hence, even though argument quality and source attractiveness recorded weak positive correlations, they were still statistically significant.

The result of the multiple linear regression analysis conducted (Table 6) showed that, source credibility was a significant predictor ( $p<.001$ ,  $\beta=.526$ ). Argument quality ( $p=.145$ ,  $\beta=.081$ ) and source attractiveness

( $p=.468$ ,  $\beta=.038$ ) were found not to be significant predictors. Therefore, based on the result of the multiple regression analysis, Hypothesis 1 of this study was accepted, while, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 were rejected.

Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

<b>Multiple linear regression analysis of perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media</b>				
Variables	Perceived impact			
	B <sup>a</sup>	$\beta^b$	Sig. (p-value)	VIF statistics
Credibility	.544	.526	<.001	1.289
Argument quality	.094	.081	.145	1.770
Attractiveness	.043	.038	.468	1.554
R <sup>2</sup>	.341			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.336			
F	64.97			

While argument quality and source attractiveness continue to be important considerations on social media (Shu & Scott, 2014; Lee, 2017; Li & Yin, 2018; Winter, 2019), we argued that, source credibility has significant effect on perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media. The credibility factor which is related to authority, credential and expertise is influential towards improving public’s perception on social media (Lin, Spence & Lachlan, 2016).

Taking into consideration the importance of source credibility, it is necessary for the authority to improve its relation with the public as well as to gain their trust and confidence (Schaap, 2020). The authority needs to ensure that they gain public’s trust as the credible crime information provider on social media (Walsh & O’Connor, 2019). In addition, credibility on social media can also be improved through recency of social media updates and cognitive elaboration (Westerman, Spence & Heide, 2014).

*Predicting behavioral intention*

Using correlation and simple linear regression analyses, this study analysed behavioural intention based on public’s perceived impact of

crime prevention information on social media. The correlation analysis in Table 7 indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media with users' behavioural intention ( $r=0.235$ ). The simple linear regression analysis in Table 8 revealed that, perceived impact of crime prevention messages on social media was significant predictor for behavioural intention ( $p<.001$ ,  $\beta=.235$ ).

Table 7: Correlation Analysis

<b>Correlation matrix of behavioural intention and perceived impact of crime prevention messages on social media</b>		
Correlation	Classification	
	Behavioral intention	Perceived impact
Behavioral intention	1.0	
Perceived impact	.235**	1.0

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 8: Simple Linear Regression Analysis

<b>Simple Linear regression analysis of behavioural intention</b>				
Variable	Behavioural intention			
	B <sup>a</sup>	$\beta^b$	Sig. (p-value)	VIF statistics
Perceived impact	.209	.235	<.001	1.0
R <sup>2</sup>	.055			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.053			
F	22.18			

This finding in particular suggested that public's intention to access the authority's crime information on social media and to share it with others is influenced by their perception towards the authority. Good positive perception enables police to engage with the public effectively on social media (Cartwright & Shaw, 2020). As proposed by Hu et al. (2018), the authority needs to develop good image and perception on

social media which can be achieved through strategic planning and execution.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The usage of social media for policing is not straight forward due to multiple complexities including issues related to privacy, misuse of information and reputation management (Davis et al., 2014; Israni et al., 2017). Nevertheless, taking into consideration how communication has revolutionised, it is necessary for the police to improve on its present usage of social media (Hu et al., 2018). While the authority has without doubt makes its presence felt on the social media sphere (Salleh, Ekhwan & Salman, 2019), it is important to move beyond visibility and to emphasise on strategic usage. One of the areas for improvement is to ensure impactful crime prevention information on social media.

Based on the findings of this study, information seeking was found to be the main reason for accessing crime prevention related information on social media. In term of information content types, the respondents of this study indicated varied preferences, including both visual and verbal. Apart from utilising different types of content (Mwaba, et al., 2017), it is necessary for the authority to thoroughly understand each content type in term of its usage and influence (Aydin, Uray & Silaharoglu, 2021). It should also be understood that, strategic social media practices differ, often influenced by the context (Aydin et al., 2021).

Even though this study reported positive perception towards the authority's crime prevention information on social media, there are still areas for enhancement. As evident in this study and also supported by the literature, actions such as access and sharing of crime prevention information on social media are influenced by trust towards the authority and its perceived performance (Bayerl, Horton, Jacobs & Akhgar, 2014). Perception towards the authority on social media is dynamic and changes overtime, shaped by chain of events and narratives that take place in the surrounding (Oglesby-Neal, Tiry & Kim, 2019).

Out of the three source factors examined, credibility was found to be the only significant predictor for perceived impact of crime prevention information on social media. This finding indicated the need for the authority to attain credibility on social media. This, can be achieved by demonstrating credential and expertise online (Lin et al., 2016).

According to Li and Suh (2015), credibility dimensions on social media are divided into two – medium and message. Medium credibility is influenced by interactivity and transparency, while message credibility is influenced by argument strength (Li & Suh, 2015).

The importance of source credibility factor also highlights the need for the authority to put greater emphasis on the message design aspects. This includes the need to understand different message appeals on social media and when to use them. As Li and Suh (2015) argued, credibility can be further enhanced with persuasion. This includes using different appeals such as informational appeal that emphasises on facts and functional benefits, while, emotional appeal focuses on emotions and relationship (Ashley & Tuten, 2014; Swani, Milne, Brown, Assaf & Donthu, 2017). As studies on social media message design are mainly in the area of marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2014; Kusumasondjaja, 2018; Pan, Torres & Zuniga, 2019), it is necessary for future studies on crime prevention to explore this further.

While the findings of this study provided some useful insights for the authority to strategise its usage of social media, particularly in disseminating crime prevention information, it is always important to keep up with the latest social media strategies and trends. This is crucial due to the nature of social media that is constantly changing (Sutherland, 2021).

### **Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (203.PCOMM.6711748)

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ISSN 0128-4878 (Print)

ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

