Consumers' Perceptions of Social Media Influencers and It's Influence on Purchase Intention of Malaysian

By

Tan Jing Kai Wong Chee Hoo*
Faculty of Business and Communications,
Email: cheehoo.wong@newinti.edu.my

Lim Shi Qi Darren Tan Chee Zhe,
INTI International University, Nilai,

Lian Yong Peng Chong Yee Foong
Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

Abstract

Social media influencers have become a popular marketing tool because they can generate buzz for businesses and draw attention to them. The main objective of this study is to determine the effectiveness of social media influencers by examining their informativeness, entertainment value, source credibility, source attractiveness, and product matchup. In this study, quantitative and descriptive research were used to achieve the research objectives. A Likert scale survey with feedback from respondents aged 18 and above who have followed, "liked," or watched any influencers on any social media platform was used to get the feedback from respondents. Convenience sampling method with a data set of 421 respondents collected and analyzed with SPSS software. The findings have shown that the informativeness, entertainment provided, source credibility, source attractiveness, and product matchup of the social media influencer pose a significant relationship towards consumers' attitudes, which in the end affects their purchase intention positively. The results show that except for the entertainment variable, which was not supported, The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was adopted for this research.

Keywords: Informativeness, Entertainment, Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, Product Match Up, Social Media Influencer, Purchase Intention

Introduction

A new and modern form of advertising called "Influencer Marketing" has been born, and this strategy has been used profoundly by companies big and small alike (Belanche et al., 2021). These individuals are not people that are famous like those "big time" celebrities, but could be fitness gurus or beauty bloggers that have at least 10,000 followers, which could go even higher from a hundred thousand to even millions. This person has a lot of followers on social media, and they have direct relationships with them. This helps them build brand loyalty and reach the right people in their niche.

Furthermore, the majority of the younger users share content that is educational or informative as well as content that is entertaining to their peers. This coincidentally matches the variable chosen by the researcher for this study on social media influencers. Yet these reports and surveys are mostly done in the west where they possess a much more positive result whereby a study done by Influencer DB reports that the Malaysian influencers are "weaker" or not as influential compared to their Southeast Asian counterparts (Teo, 2019). With so many

positive results that show that influencers are working well with marketers and influencing consumer buying intentions, this research aims to point out the effectiveness of these influencers or even solidify the less than optimum results produced by the Malaysian influencers to sway consumer intentions and the consumer attitude towards these influencers.

Problem Statement

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in people who sell or brand themselves as influencers. Rookies try to get brand endorsements as a living or side income. The majority of the research done focuses on social media platforms and their effectiveness in swaying consumers' attitudes and their purchase intentions, but not the influencers. Hence, the need to close the gap in the matter of social media influencers influencing the consumers' attitudes and their intention to purchase. Furthermore, the need to fill in the gap between the antecedents of this social media marketing research and the value of endorsing these influencers to be a part of a business marketing plan, plus whether it works positively for the company,

Using the theory of reasoned action, this study focuses on understanding the antecedents of consumers' attitudes toward social media influencers and their impact on purchase intention between informative, entertainment, source credibility, source attractiveness, and product match out as independent variables, and consumers' attitudes with impact on purchase intention as a dependent variable.

Thus, this research attempted to answer the following research question (RQ):

RQ1. What is the relationship between the content created by the influencer (i.e. informativeness) and the consumers' attitude towards social media influencers?

RQ2. What is the relationship between the garnered from the content created by the influencer (i.e. entertainment) and the consumer's attitude towards social media influencers?

RQ3. What is the relationship between the social media influencer (i.e. credibility) and the consumer's attitude towards them?

RQ4. What is the relationship between the social media influencer (i.e. attractiveness) and the consumer's attitude towards them?

RQ5. What is the relationship between the Social Media Influencer (i.e. product match-up) and the consumer's attitude towards them?

RQ6. What is the relationship between the consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers towards purchase intention?

Literature Review

Intention

TRA has been utilised in marketing to understand and explain consumer purchasing behaviour based on intention (Tsai et al., 2010). In line with prior research assertions, TRA is offered as a contextual foundation for understanding so-called influencers (third-party endorsers – comparable to celebrity endorsements) who impact consumer attitudes via the use of social media. The exploratory research discusses ideas about behaviour that are specified by the qualities of the object. There are seven types of behavioral beliefs discovered, which include perceived informativeness, perceived entertainment, perceived credibility, perceived beauty, and product matching of the audience's influencer (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Attitude towards Influencer

There are extensive research studies in the literature that describe consumer attitudes toward social media influencers. According to (Pöyry et al., 2021), the primary goals are to

investigate the concepts of celebrity endorsement and authenticity, as well as the effects of celebrity and content characteristics on followers' attitudes towards the content. The results show that the photos of social media influencers, people who have become famous through social media, increase purchase intentions more than photos of general celebrities. It means that the similarity between the photo and the celebrity has the biggest effect on how people feel about buying the photo.

Informativeness

Researchers have conducted many empirical studies on informativeness. The first researcher (Alalwan, 2018) said that this study mainly investigates whether the informativeness level of social media advertising can lead consumers to better purchase behaviour and increase their purchase intention accordingly. As a result, informativeness has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions for products presented in social media advertisements. They confirmed that informativeness was the strongest factor in increasing consumers' perception of the value of advertising.

Entertainment

There are many empirical studies that describe the relationship between entertainment and customer attitudes. The researchers (Shen et al., 2019) mentioned that this study mainly explores the relationship between whether information containing entertainment content and advertisements will affect consumers' purchasing intentions. According to their research, the result shows that entertainment is one of the factors that make advertisements popular. It also shows that customers feel happy when they receive advertisements or product information that contains entertainment content through mobile platforms. This information will affect their purchase intentions.

Source Credibility

To investigate the credibility of information influencing online luxury consumption purchase intentions and online luxury product recommendation purchase intentions. To investigate the influencer's credibility impacts their follower attitude and also refer to a study of source credibility and trustworthiness will improve the relationship between online luxury shoppers and it will affect high-end purchases. (Ma et al., 2021) Furthermore, as an influencer, their credibility is very important to enhancing the relationship with their followers. Therefore, the promotion of influencer credibility will influence their followers' attitudes and follower intention to action (Belanche et al., 2021).

Source Attractiveness

Studies about the source attractiveness and the consumer's purchase intention. So, in the first research (Lim Leong Chye, 2019), it says that the primary goal of this study is to better understand GenY consumers' purchasing habits for environmentally friendly items in Malaysia by identifying the variables that have a positive significant association with them. And the relevant studies are showing that they are willing to consider the environmental qualities of the items they are considering purchasing, Gen Y customers are more likely to choose environmentally friendly products. They are regarded as well-educated, mature, and ecologically aware people.

Product Match Up

Researchers have conducted many empirical studies on the relationship between product match-up and purchase intention. According to Adam and Nazish (2019), they stated that the main focus of this study is to determine how marketers can use celebrities to change consumer buying patterns and how they can create a good image by choosing strong public favorite celebrities. Studying the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumers' purchase

intentions is one way to study the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumers' purchase intentions. At the same time, it will help marketers better understand which attributes are most important to consumers.
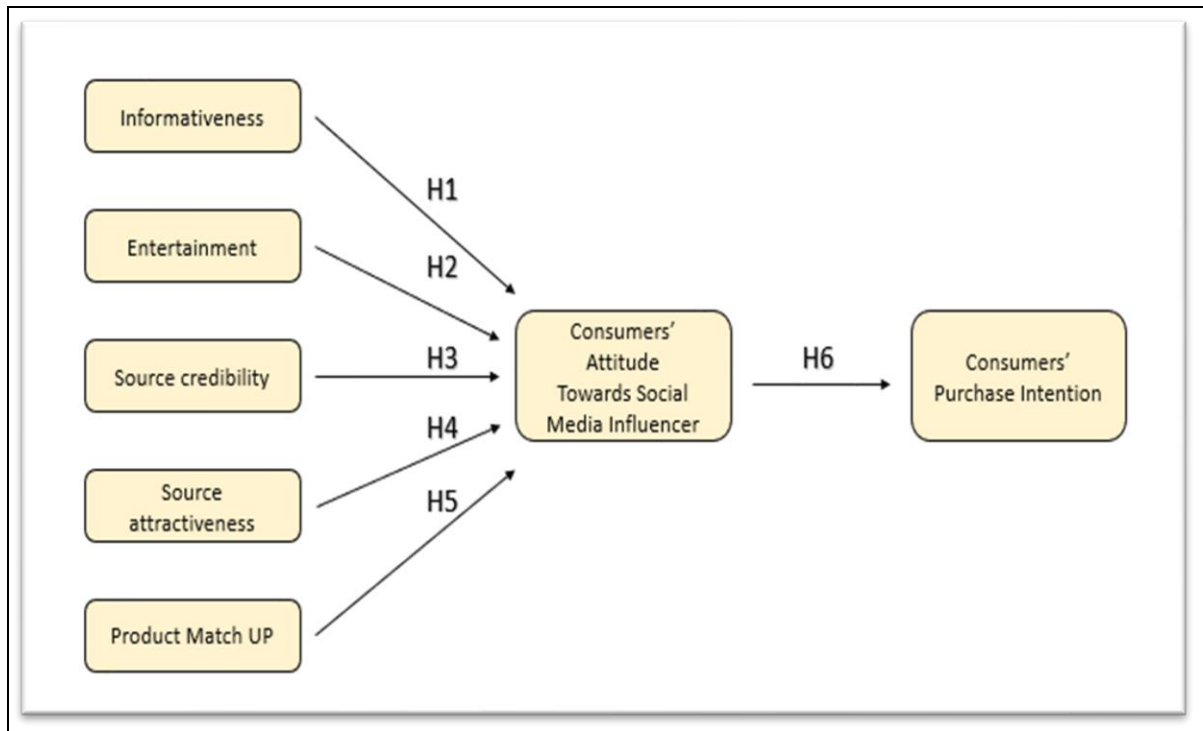
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 – *Conceptual Framework for the Impact of Social Media Influencer on Consumers' Purchase Intention*

According to Figure 1 above, this conceptual framework helps in identifying the relationships among the independent and dependent variables. There are five independent variables. Specifically, informativeness and entertainment whereby the endorsed influencers create content (videos, live feeds, pictures) to market the product that the companies have required. Irritation is not included because consumers are required to "follow" or "like" the influencers before they are able to constantly see this influencer's content. whereas, in celebrity endorsement studies, source credibility, attractiveness, and product match up are variables that were adapted for this study on social media influencers. The five independent variables were tested on consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers. The dependent variables are the consumers' attitude towards social media influencers and the consumers' purchase intention. Henceforth, the association of these variables could be determined.

Methodology

This research used quantitative, descriptive research to examine the influence of people's attitudes towards social media influencers and the influence of their purchase intentions, and in-depth research is needed. The selected sampling design method is convenience sampling, and the data collection method uses online questionnaires to obtain a large amount of raw data. The questionnaire is designed using Google Forms so that respondents can accept the survey anytime and anywhere and use online methods to send links to other target groups. According to Bukhari (2021), the most appropriate sample size for this study was 384, but 420 people filled out the survey, and the response rate was very good.

Results

Table 1: *Pearson Correlation*

		Informativeness	Entertainment	Source Credibility	Source Attractiveness	Product Match h Up	Attitude	Purchase Intention
Pearson Correlations								
Informativeness	Pearson Correlation	1	.759**	.769**	.742**	.755**	.729**	.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419
Entertainment	Pearson Correlation	.759**	1	.720**	.713**	.710**	.682**	.617**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419
SourceCredibility	Pearson Correlation	.769**	.720**	1	.738**	.725**	.728**	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419
SourceAttractiveness	Pearson Correlation	.742**	.713**	.738**	1	.817**	.798**	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419
ProductMatchUp	Pearson Correlation	.755**	.710**	.725**	.817**	1	.795**	.674**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.729**	.682**	.728**	.798**	.795**	1	.758**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419
PurchaseIntention	Pearson Correlation	.693**	.617**	.715**	.652**	.674**	.758**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	419	419	419	419	419	419	419

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Pearson Correlation Coefficient = r
Source: Developed for the research.

As it shown above Table 1, the results have a positive correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Hence, all the independent variable has a

strong correlation with consumer attitude towards social media influencer with the source attractiveness variable being moderately strong(Lakens, 2013) where r<0.8.

Table 2: *Multiple Linear Regression (Model Summary)*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
		Model Summary		
1	0.849[a]	0.721	0.718	0.44299

Source: Developed for the research.

a. Predictor: (Constant). Informativeness, Entertainment, Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, Product Matchup

b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Attitude towards Social Media Influencer

Based on Table 2 above, the R-squared value is 0.721, which means that 72.1% of consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers (the dependent variable) can be described by independent variables

Table 3: *Anova*

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
			ANOVA[a]			
	Regression	209.821	5	41.964	213.837	0.000[b]
1	Residual	81.049	413	0.196		
	Total	290.870	418			

According to Table 3 above, the P-value (Sig. 0.000) is less than α value =0.05. F-ratio is significant(Hair et al., 2021) . Therefore, the theoretical model of this study well describes the relationship between dependent variables and independent variables.

Table4: *Multiple Linear Regression (Coefficients)*

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			Coefficients[a]			
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	0.369	0.114		3.223	0.001
	Informativeness	0.105	0.048	0.107	2.182	0.030
	Entertainment	0.037	0.042	0.039	0.887	0.376
1	Source Credibility	0.131	0.041	0.153	3.344	0.001
	Source Attractiveness	0.324	0.050	0.322	6.456	0.000
	Product Match-up	0.305	0.049	0.313	6.286	0.000

Based on the Table 4 above, source attractiveness and product matchup are significantly positively correlated with consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers, with p values of 0.000 respectively. The source credibility and informativeness were 0.001 and 0.030 respectively, which also had a significant impact on consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers, lower than the alpha value of 0.05. However, entertainment was no significant relationship against consumer attitudes towards social media influencers, with a P value of 0.376, higher than the alpha value of 0.10.

Table 5: *Simple Linear Regression Analysis*

<div align="center">Coefficients^a</div>

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.885	0.134		6.586	0.000
1 Consumer Attitude Towards Social Media Influencer	0.787	0.033	0.758	23.706	0.000

Based on the Table 5, the consumer attitude towards social media influencer depicts a significant relationship with the purchase intention with its P-value being 0.000, that is below alpha value of 0.05.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: *Hypothesis Testing Summary*

Hypothesis	P-value	Status
H1: There is a significant relationship between informativeness and consumers' attitude towards Social Media Influencer.	P<0.05	Supported
H2: There is a significant relationship between entertainment and consumers' attitude towards Social Media Influencer.	P>0.05	Not Supported
H3: There is a significant relationship between the credibility of the Social Media Influencer and consumers' attitude towards them.	P<0.10	Supported
H4: There is a significant relationship between the attractiveness of the Social Media Influencer and consumer's attitude towards them	P<0.10	Supported
H5: There is a significant relationship between the product matchup of the Social Media Influencer and the consumer's attitude towards them.	P<0.05	Supported
H6: There is a significant relationship between consumers' attitude towards Social Media Influencer and purchase intention.	P<0.05	Supported

From Table 6, Informativeness, Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness and Product Match-up significantly and positively correlate with consumer's attitudes towards social media influences. Entertainment is not supported. Attitude towards social influencer also significantly influence the purchase intention of customers. In short, Hypothesis 1,3,4,5,6 is supported.

Conclusion

The study showed that during the COVID-19 period in Malaysia, entertainment did not significantly affect consumer attitudes towards social media influencers. The p-value of 0.376 for the coefficient is much larger than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, statistically showing

that there is no significant relationship also means that the sub-hypothesis is not supported. Therefore, a question arises, "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are these social media influencers facing declining views or declining followers, as well as the difficulty of facing consumers' changing attitudes?"

The study also showed that during the COVID-19 period in Malaysia, informativeness, source credibility, source attractiveness, and product match-up significantly affected consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers. Therefore, this hypothesis is mostly supported, which means that the four dimensions are supported. According to the results of this study, there is a significant positive correlation between informativeness, source credibility, source attractiveness, and product match-up and consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers.

The study has provided important data which shows that all dimensions do significantly contribute to consumers' attitudes toward social media influencers except for the entertainment dimension. Therefore, future research can be improved by studying other factors of larger sample sizes. In addition, future research can also study how the gender and experience of social media influencers affect consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers, which helps to understand consumers' attitudes towards social media influencers and increase their willingness to buy.

Studies have shown that paying attention to consumers' attitudes toward social media influencers is important to increasing consumers' willingness to buy. Therefore, companies and marketers can use this research as a study to consider when hiring social media influencers to ensure that they hire suitable social media influencers and generate higher profits. Furthermore, management can conduct surveys or feedback meetings among their employees to check what factors influence their attitudes toward social media influencers. Good results or feedback can be used to get employees or other groups interested in the brand or product that the social media influencer is promoting.

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