

The Impact of Social Media Influencers Towards Consumers' Attitude

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of marketing trends is closely tied to the increasing use of social media, driven by advancements in technology and the preferences of the younger generation. Brands are increasingly leveraging the influence of social media personalities as endorsers, making social media influencer marketing one of the most prevalent and effective strategies for promoting products and services. Compared to traditional marketing methods, influencer marketing has demonstrated greater effectiveness in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. This study examines the impact of social media influencers on consumers' attitudes, focusing on the Malaysian context. Data were collected through an online survey to explore how influencer marketing influences purchasing decisions. The findings reveal that consumers are more inclined to trust and purchase products endorsed by influencers than those promoted through official advertising. By analyzing the role of influencers in shaping consumer attitudes, this research underscores the importance of promoting responsible consumption patterns, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12). The study advocates for brands and influencers to encourage ethical consumption and sustainable practices, ensuring that marketing efforts contribute to the broader goal of achieving sustainable production and responsible consumer behavior.

Keywords

Social Media Influencers, Consumer Attitudes, Influencer Marketing, Responsible Consumption

Introduction

With the rapid advancement of the digital era, social media has evolved into an essential tool with significant impacts on daily life, particularly for marketers and communication-driven corporations. Social media platforms have become the cornerstone of modern communication and advertising strategies, enabling brands to connect with their audiences in increasingly innovative ways.

According to social media statistics, social media usage has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 12% since 2012 (Iqbal, 2021). In 2021 alone, an average of 13.5 new users registered per second. One of the most popular platforms, Instagram, generated an estimated \$47.6

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billion in revenue in 2021, a significant increase fueled by the pandemic, which attracted more users and advertisers to the platform (Iqbal, 2021). Notably, 90% of Instagram users follow at least one business, and its advertisements have reached nearly 30% of global internet users.

This surge in social media usage has given rise to new marketing trends, with influencer marketing emerging as one of the most prominent. Influencer marketing involves collaborations between brands and online influencers to promote products and services. Unlike traditional advertising models, influencer marketing leverages the trust and authenticity influencers have established with their audiences to drive engagement and brand loyalty (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Influencers act as intermediaries, bridging the gap between brands and consumers by creating personalized and relatable content that resonates with their followers (Freberg et al., 2011).

Research shows that influencer marketing is highly effective in boosting consumer trust and purchase intentions, particularly among younger demographics like Generation Z (De Veirman et al., 2017). Brands are increasingly recognizing the power of influencers, with the global influencer marketing industry projected to reach \$16.4 billion by 2022 (Statista, 2022). This strategy's success is grounded in its ability to humanize brands and foster a sense of community among consumers, making it a preferred choice over traditional advertising methods (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

While some partnerships focus on direct promotion, others aim to enhance brand awareness and foster long-term connections with consumers. As influencer marketing continues to evolve, its integration into broader digital marketing strategies highlights the growing importance of authenticity, consumer trust, and the personalized nature of modern advertising efforts.

The key aspect of persuasion is the communicator or source of the message's credibility (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). Higher source credibility influencers are more likely to make contact and friendship with consumers, which increases the likelihood that they will have an impact on consumers (Jin & Seung, 2014). An important statistic for assessing the social influence of influencers and online social resources is the number of followers and the development of friendships (Granovetter, 1973). According to Tong et al. (2008), customers are more likely to trust influencers who have a larger following. As a result, consumers trust influencers when they accept influence in order to create or maintain a personalised relationship with others, which goes beyond the fact that they trust the masses and mainstream influencers more generally (Kelman, 2006).

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beyond the fact that they trust the masses and mainstream influencers more generally (Kelman, 2006).

Influencers may draw in customers and hold their attention for a long time; in other words, they can keep customers around because of their distinctive allure. For instance, a song is the unique point of a singing influencer, while a fashion YouTuber's unique point is their dress code. Followers deliberately alter their beliefs and way of life by imitating influencers, giving them a strong sense of social identity (Fraser & Brown, 2002). Another extremely noticeable quality of influencers is their professionalism. Both Mowen, Park, and Zablah (2007) and Thakur et al. (2016) highlighted that fashion leaders' knowledge and competence have a substantial impact on their followers and that professional knowledge is seen as a trustworthy source of information.

According to Aliff et al. (2014), consumer attitudes while considering making purchases online may be understood by their positive and negative sensations. Consumer attitude is commonly impacted by emotion, and according to a previous study by Aliff et al. (2014), who used the model of attitude change and behaviour, consumer attitude is influenced by the intention to buy. Research from the past demonstrated that attitudes and buying intentions will be negatively impacted by perceived risk associated with the purchasing intention.

Although customers may be unable to determine whether to purchase specific items, promotional prices sometimes lead to spontaneous purchases (Husnain, Rehman, Syed & Akhtar, 2018). The price-sensitive characteristics boost the relative importance of retail promotions and raise the possibility of impulsive purchases. Customer favorability may grow thanks to the welcoming personnel. Customers will feel better and spend more money in the business if personnel assist them in making judgments and selecting things by giving them additional information about those products (Husnain, Rehman, Syed & Akhtar, 2018).

Methodology

This study investigated the influence of social media on customer attitude, mediated by influencer image and credibility as shown in Figure 1.

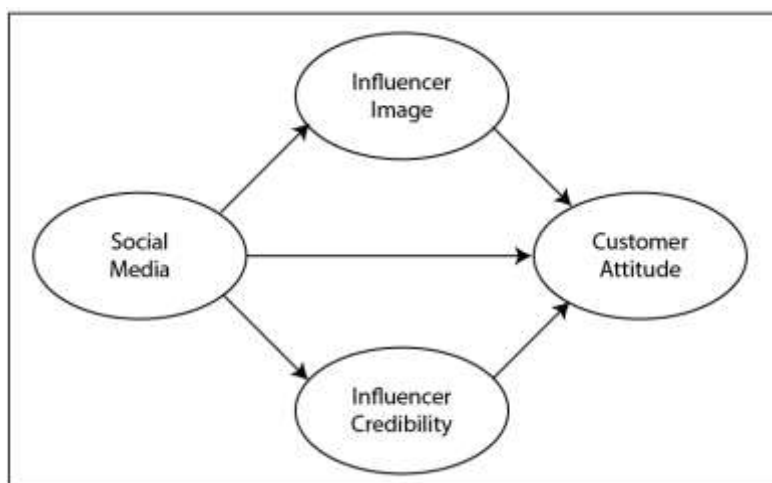


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

The following hypothesis was tested:

HA1: Influencer image and credibility positively mediate the relationship between social media usage and customer attitude.

Data were collected via an online survey administered through Google Forms over three months, from January to April 2022. Participants were recruited through online engagement using convenience sampling. A total of 113 usable responses were obtained.

The survey comprised five sections. Section A collected demographic information, including gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, education level, occupation, monthly income, primary social media platform used, and daily social media usage. Sections B, C, D, and E contained reflective items measuring the constructs of social media usage, influencer image, influencer credibility, and customer attitude, respectively. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

A face and content validity validation method were performed on the survey data acquired. The demographic profiles (such as gender, age, nationality, ethnic group, education level, occupation, monthly income, most active use of social media platforms, daily social media usage) are collected, which shows the frequency and percentage of the respondents. Section B, C, D and E represent each of the constructs, namely social media, influencer image, influencer credibility, and customer attitude. A reliability test was carried out first to determine the degree of consistency using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A normality test follows after before executing the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) in validating the data and confirming the hypothesis of the study.

Results and Discussion

Data from a total of 113 responses were successfully captured without any gaps or missing data. The reliability test was carried out and reported as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha of Each Scale (n=113)

	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
IV	Social Media	0.717	7
Med 1	Influencer Image	0.805	5
Med 2	Influencer Credibility	0.716	5
DV	Customer Attitude	0.742	3

The results of the reliability tests confirm the suitability of the instruments employed above the 0.7 cutoff value (Pavlidis & Katana, 2004). With the confirmation of the reliability test within accepted values, the normality test was executed to check and ensure dataset is well-modeled by a normal distribution and to compute how likely it is for a random variable underlying the data set to be normally distributed. Table 2 illustrates the result of the normality test, which incorporates the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test, which provides more objective measures of normality.

Table 2. Normality Tests For Variables

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Social Media	0.108	113	0.002	0.935	113	0
Influencer Image	0.179	113	0	0.944	113	0
Influencer Credibility	0.152	113	0	0.96	113	0.002
Customer Attitude	0.162	113	0	0.883	113	0

The analytics follow through with the validity analysis using SEM, primarily in measuring the goodness-of-fit statistics of the conceptual model. As the research area leans more towards psychometrics aspect, the Principle Components Analysis (PCA) method was employed in this study. The KMO and Bartlett's test are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Table of KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.817
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1095.529
	df	190
	Sig.	0

The 20 items were subjected to PCA using SPSS. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value is 0.817, which exceeds the acceptance value of 0.6, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reaches statistical significance, which is lower than 0.05. Subsequently Table 4 portrays the results of the PCA analysis.

Table 4 Table of Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.769	28.843	28.843	5.769	28.843	28.843
2	4.16	20.798	49.64	4.16	20.798	49.64
3	1.341	6.703	56.344	1.341	6.703	56.344
4	1.02	5.099	61.442	1.02	5.099	61.442
5	0.974	4.871	66.313			
6	0.896	4.48	70.794			
7	0.863	4.316	75.11			
8	0.702	3.512	78.622			
9	0.656	3.279	81.9			
10	0.535	2.675	84.575			
11	0.44	2.2	86.775			
12	0.413	2.066	88.841			
13	0.398	1.991	90.832			
14	0.385	1.924	92.756			
15	0.33	1.652	94.408			
16	0.303	1.513	95.921			
17	0.244	1.221	97.141			
18	0.221	1.104	98.246			
19	0.188	0.941	99.187			
20	0.163	0.813	100			

The PCA analysis in Table 4 shows the loadings at 61.44%, which is slightly higher than the 60% cutoff. This shows that the output barely scrape through. In reflection to the PCA analysis, the scree plot output confirms all 4 variables exceeding the eigenvalues of 1.

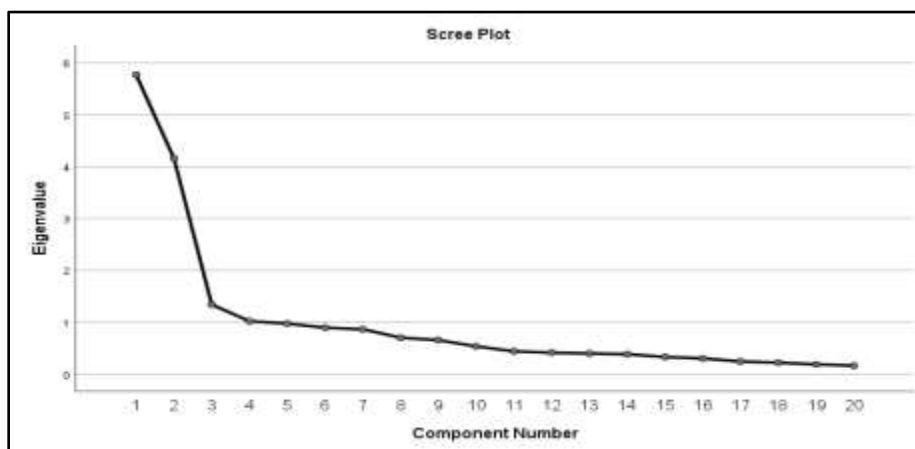


Figure 2 Scree Plot

The varimax rotation option was selected in maximising the variance of the squared loadings for each factor in order to make the factors more interpretable.

Table 5 Varimax Rotation of Four Factor Solution

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
IV1	0.802			
IV2	0.759			
IV3	0.717			
IV4	0.707			
IV5	0.692			
IV6	0.676			
IV7	0.664			
MED11		0.76		
MED12		0.712		
MED13		0.696		
MED14		0.6		
MED15		0.431		0.421
MED21			0.84	
MED22			0.674	
MED23		0.441	0.657	
MED24			0.621	
MED25		0.46	0.475	
DV1				0.736
DV2				0.623
DV3	0.518			0.607

While the rotation generally produced a clear factor structure, 4 variables exhibited cross-loadings, especially the items representing the second mediating variable with a total of 2 cross-loadings.

By examining the conceptual model through Principal Component Analysis, this study demonstrates that the impact of social media influencers on customer attitudes is shaped by factors such as influencer image and credibility. These insights are particularly valuable for diversity marketers seeking to understand consumer behavior in the context of digital marketing trends.

For influencers, the study highlights the importance of maintaining credibility and fostering positive customer perceptions to ensure long-term engagement and trust. By managing their accounts across diverse platforms effectively, influencers not only gain social and financial benefits but also contribute to shaping sustainable consumption patterns. Aligning with SDG 12, these findings underscore the need for responsible marketing practices that promote ethical consumption and production. In conclusion, the study reinforces the role of social media influencers as powerful agents in shaping consumer attitudes while advocating for sustainable and ethical approaches in the digital marketing landscape.

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