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Social Media Influencers Source Credibility and Product Fit Impact on Customers Purchasing Intentions, Under the Moderating Effect of Gender, Malaysian Context

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to identify the source credibility of social media influencers that impact customer's purchase intention under the moderating effect of gender. It adopts the Ohanian model of sources credibility and Kamins, Michael A.'s "match-up" hypothesis. The conceptual model includes (purchase intention" source credibility" trustworthiness" attractiveness" expertise "gender and product match-up). The researchers employed online surveys to collect responses on the criteria in the current study, which took a quantitative approach, using convenience sampling techniques. A total of 231 responses were received after data cleaning, 209 responses were accepted. SmartPLS 3, were used for data analysis. The research findings show that expertise, attractiveness, and match-up are the key factors that influence customers' purchase intention and describe the customer's perception of influencers, except for trustworthiness, which suggests that Malaysian customers are aware of the authenticity issues of social media influencers. This study also revealed that there is no moderating effect across gender regarding social media influencers except for trustworthiness. The study has implications for general management as social media influencer has a powerful impact on effective communication and marketing strategies.

Keywords: Communication" E-WOM" Influencer" Marketing" Social media marketing"

INTRODUCTION

The continual and ongoing use of social media and social networking sites has resulted in the creation of vital information and content [1]As a result, firms can use engaging platforms to handle promotional operations. More than 1.5 billion people across the Asia Pacific now use social networking sites every month, with 95% reaching platforms via mobile devices, therefore, growing to be the largest segment of, social networking site consumers in the world.[2] With the social media marketing actions possible, firms are frequently switching to digital influencers (SMIs) to endorse their brands because influencers correlate the expected target audience with brands while providing direct communication with their following .[3]

Moreover, they are commonly observed as sources of relevant and credible information for people who follow them, which is a desirable condition to increase the diffusion and influence of their messages. This is especially beneficial for companies that involve influencers in their electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) strategy as trustworthy, online opinion leaders to promote their brands and enhance their image and value, based on their view that influencers have the power to persuade consumers to purchase the endorsed brands[1]. These persuasive ordinary consumers can turn opinions, raise brand awareness, or drain it.

Social Media Influencers referred to as (SMIs) Usually been known as an innovative type of self-governing third-party endorser who shapes audience perspectives through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media. In this time of global online reach [4]There are relevant characters of people that could have a remarkable impact on people's opinions which make personal or behavioral characteristics of an influencer essential to take into consideration to determine the appropriate one. A wide range of signs that might be related to influencing characteristics is a social activity, charisma, expertise, power, authority, shared interests, uniqueness, innovativeness, amount of followers/friend's etcetera [5]Certain individuals can have more influence than others due to their social status, personal features, and overall image, including age, gender, and even marital status [6]

Problem Statement

In January 2021, there were 28.00 million social media users in Malaysia, according to Datareportal. Between 2020 and 2021, the number of social media users in Malaysia increased by 2.0 million (+7.7%). In January 2021, Malaysia's social media users accounted for 86.0 percent of the country's total population [7]. In a survey on social media influencers conducted by Joschka Müller, Insight October 2020, approximately 77 percent of female and 73 percent of male respondents in Malaysia said they followed at least one influencer on social media. The same survey discovered that the majority of the respondents had purchased an item or product recommended by an influencer [8]. Therefore, the use of (SMIs) to deliver Influencer-driven marketing communications is on the top of the strategies implemented by marketing professionals [8]. Social media influencers influence their followers by giving information, presenting recommendations, providing personal opinions, and increasing professional knowledge. [7]. They may be called opinion leaders, micro-celebrities, social media influencers, or influentials those self-made people are affecting the formation of attitudes, public information, and opinions [8]. Since definitions and understandings of Social media influencers and influencer communications are diverse and confusing [9]. It is important to briefly highlight the specific characteristics of Social media influencers and influencer communication that distinguish them from ordinary celebrities and celebrity endorsement approaches. Social media influencers constantly evolving phenomenon has created complicated challenges in general management, as it might intercept with the organization's functional departments, overall control of information, communication, marketing strategies, and production. Therefore, the researcher argues that it's imperative to investigate customers' perceptions of social media influencers through investigating, the dimensions of social media influencers' source credibility, impact on consumers purchasing intentions, under the moderating effect of customers' gender. In other words, examining the strength and direction of the link between consumers' purchase intention, source credibility dimensions, and product match-up, including which perceived credibility of an influencer better explains customers` purchase intention of

the products promoted by the influencer. Firstly, this study aims to contribute to the academic body involving the understanding of customers' perception of social media influencers' source credibility. Secondly, it contributes to the medium and small-sized firms that often have limited resources and need to concentrate on fewer channels to adopting overall general management that aligns with the new strategies of social media influencers' communication, marketing, information, and production management. The current study will fill in the gap in research that previously might be performed in other countries yet not in Malaysia.

Aim of the Research

This research aims to determine the strength and direction of the link between consumers' perception of social media influencers, source credibility dimensions, and product match-up, including how the perception varies across gender. Furthermore, to discover how the credibility of an influencer impact customers` purchase intention.

Research Questions

1. What is the strength and direction of the link between consumers' purchase intention, source credibility dimensions: Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise?
2. What is the strength and direction of the link between consumers' purchase intention, and product match-up?
3. Does the perception of social media influencers' sources preserve credibility vary across gender?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The Literature Review framework of this study is to locate existing literature that is relevant to the research and the understanding of social media influencers. Therefore, this section reviews the previous literature related to or on the topic of social media influencer marketing. The use of influencer marketing aims to improve the purchase intention and actual purchase of the endorsed product as well as to span the repeated purchase of the brand achieved through brand trust. This chapter proposes to give a scope of the literature related to this thesis' research.

Social Media and social media influencers

Social media is characterized as a community of internet-based networks established on an ideological and technological basis [10], which enables content and information to be generated and shared between users. In addition, [11] study stated that companies and various government agencies have been using social media networks to engage their consumers and people as part of their communication channels. That indicates that their network is primarily driven by customer purchasing decisions. [12], also indicated that social media can be described as a medium through which users can share multiple sources of internet-based information on various topics.

Social media platforms are referred to as channels through which information is shared by users, according to the [13] report. It is also used to build awareness of the commodity and shift customer buying behavior and purchasing intentions. In the same way, [14] study stated that social media offers a company the chance to reach a wider audience. In the following ways, social media marketing can be conducted: weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts,

photos, videos, ratings, and social bookmarking [15]. It is also possible to interpret social media marketing as internet-based marketing that replaces conventional marketing. In addition, [16] claimed that influencer marketing typically endorses a person on a social media site who has created many followers. Because of its presence, impacts, or contributions to the environment in which brand ambassadors are often involved. [17] claimed in the same vein that social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc. are networks through which it is possible to attract multiple users, customers and customers. Traditional marketing techniques have been undermined by the rise in the acceptance and use of social media sites, and as such, different companies have adapted their marketing strategies to their product's internet-based marketing to attract a greater number of customers.

There is no question that the advancement of social media and other related elements has been of tremendous assistance to brand owners/marketers in finding new ways to communicate with their target audience. And as such, via internet-based networks or channels, organizations may connect or reach out to their different clients and users. Various studies such as [18] indicate that, because the platform was built for interactions and not for selling goods, social media users are not comfortable with selling ads on their feeds. In addition, for example, the number of advertisement blockers is increasing at an unprecedented rate; ad blocking is reportedly increasing by 40% annually, and more than six hundred million strategies were implementing such methods of advertising blocking software at the end of 2016, and this threat makes it impossible for social media users to access different marketing software.

Marketing advertisers frequently use celebrities or experts to share their expertise and experience in promoting a product/service to make consumers remember products. Promotion endorsers can create an Impact of recommendation and endorsement and increase customer reliability and intention to buy. Moreover, while selling a product it cannot depend solely on whether a product is. Preferably, it should utilize advertising endorsers to recommend and promote a product to make a perfect product image and influence consumers' purchase intentions. Consequently, endorsement marketing can give a product a new image and more exposure to customers and exceedingly improve product recognition [19] .

Individuals follow influencers' lives on social media, the influencer marketing approach seems almost like the natural part of their daily lives instead of advertising, which is generally still is. Were influencers posting about trademarks and products on their social media, can be perceived as fellow social media users by their followers, through the message of the brands are perceived as further reliable and trustworthy. that influence may be a long--term proposition that's grown and nurtured over time. Users create social media content through their participation, comments, and likes, and finally, their information facilitates responses from other members. (SMIs) and companies encourage their social networks to not just only consume content, but actively exhibit social media engagement behaviors in such a way that they drive new content [20].

A research agenda for researching factors that can influence marketing effectiveness in the sense of online communities is suggested by [21]. The paper proposes a model of research that integrates both network and individual variables, describes the research strategy, and addresses the research's possible implications. This study proposes a research model that

studies the impacts on the efficiency of E-WOM marketing across online social networks of both individual and network characteristics. The model experiments blogs at its primary level, followed by a large-scale field experiment on real blog sites. The research showed that the characteristics of the customer as well as the characteristics of the network both influence the purchasing intentions of the consumer and their attitude towards the product being endorsed to a great degree in either a positive or negative way.

A research paper on the effects of social effects on Taiwan's plan to use bloggers[22]. The authors suggest a conceptual structure that incorporates information quality, system quality, blog feature quality, and social impact as key determinants of the purpose of bloggers to use, based on the IS performance model. An online survey gathered analytical knowledge from 613 participants. The findings show that the quality of content, system quality, and blog function quality, i.e., the technical variables, have a positive effect on the intention of bloggers to use them. Among these characteristics, the most prominent is device quality. Social impact greatly affects the purpose of bloggers to use social factors directly and implicitly through blog platform features. A multi-group study revealed the variations in the expectations of blog platform characteristics between blog readers and writers and the strength of route coefficients between factors in the conceptual model.

A research paper on information and food blogging in the United Kingdom as serious recreation [20]. The conceptualization of food blogging by participants and the role of knowledge in it is interpreted by 6 in-depth, hour-long interviews and activity reviews on the website of the UK Food Bloggers Association. The study found that food blogging, rather than just a recreational practice, has become a paying occupation. In addition, the credibility of the restaurants and the foods they try here is influenced by food bloggers' feedback and suggestions. Bloggers are now invited by restaurants to rate their dishes and make them popular among the masses.

A researched on how social media shapes behavior along with some empirical data on distant customers [21]. The paper aims to examine how social media-related centers of measurement are now evolving and how they affect the process of acting on distant customers. The authors primarily concentrate on investigating how social media influences the disconnect between the company and the consumer. The study is being carried out in an Italian telecommunications corporation with 50000 workers. Through the analysis, by underpinning the contentious effects associated with calculation centers introduced by social media data, they contribute to an emerging stream of literature that explores accounting consequences derived from social media. The authors suggest that while social media data provides the organization with a huge amount of real-time information, at the same time it leads to decentering, rather than improving awareness within the center, enabling consumers and external actors to act on the organization. This research should help managers enter the world of social media, indicating that they should carefully examine how to use all these related studies of social media.

Hypotheses Development

Source credibility [22] developed the Factors in Social Media influencer Value Model (SMIV), in line with the Advertisement Value Model. This model describes the role of source reputation in consumer behavior and redefines the concept of trust in the sense of impact. According to this, the perceived confidence, brand recognition, and also purchasing intention is affected by

reputation. More specifically, three of the credibility elements: trustworthiness, similarity, and attractiveness proved to have positive effects on perceived trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention. Besides credibility, advertising content value, in this case, influencer-generated content, consisting of informative and entertainment values can have positive effects on perceived trust, brand awareness, and purchase intentions as well. The credibility of the source refers to the customers' interpretation of the information source. Due to the existence of anonymous and numerous writers, establishing the concept of source authenticity on social media may be a challenge; there are no gatekeepers, we are faced with genre fusion and advertisement mixing. People prefer to accept certain sources if others likewise do so [23]. Influencers in social media are used both as outlets and as media. Previous source credibility research has emphasized the role of the communicator's trustworthiness, beauty, and experience in the specific case of celebrity endorsement advertising [24]. Within the theoretical context of the Source credibility Theory, based on three aspects: trustworthiness, competence, and attractiveness, [25] introduced a new feature, applied exclusively to influencers of social media, which is similarity (the similarity between influencers and their followers, about demographic or ideological factors). This study expects a high impact of social media influencers' marketing impact on consumers purchasing intentions in Malaysia.

Trustworthiness

Could be crucial to the amount of influence that an influencer has over its followers [23]. The two previous factors are what together determine the strength of the trust and credibility that is created between the influencer and the consumer. For example, if a consumer; beliefs in the message behind the content provided by the influencer. Source trustworthiness involves the interpretation of a source as trustworthy, genuine, or truthful by the recipients [24].

H1: There is a positive relationship between source Trustworthiness and purchase intention.

Attractiveness

The first hypothesis of the source-credibility model is attractiveness. In extension to both trustworthiness and expertise, a social media influencers endorser’s attractiveness, as perceived by consumers, likely is essential. The category of attractiveness refers more to an influencer's status, namely its success and prestige as influencers [25]. The attractiveness can also be connected to how a consumer feels about or thinks about an influencer and whether the consumer finds the influencer likeable by treating the influencer as a friend on a more personal level. An influencer's attractiveness may also involve how the user is feeling about the influencer's physical appearance and other features. Attractiveness entails one’s outward physical appearance—that is, someone who is perceived as beautiful, elegant, or classy[26].

H2: There is a positive relationship between source attractiveness and purchase intention.

Product Match-up

To deliver excellent performance, congruency between an endorser and the product is key. The match-up hypothesis examines the connection between the brand and an endorser [27]. Effective alignment between an endorser and the brand can be used as a good marketing technique [28]. There also emerges a major match-up relationship with the advent of a close connection between an endorser and the commodity [29]. In other words, as a representative

of the brand, social media influencers must show a suitable fit with the features of the product. The perfect match would lead to a valuable outlook on the goal [30]. Matching between the endorser and the brand is the most significant feature of the customer's purchasing intentions. A better fit between the social media influencers and the products will significantly boost the outcome of the advertisement.

H3: There is a positive relationship between influencers product match-up and purchase intention.

Expertise

In terms of source credibility, not only are attractiveness and trustworthiness essential constructions, but expertise or the perceived expertise of a source will have a positive effect on the attitudes and credibility of the source [31] The expertise of an influencer is in simpler words referred to that the influencer knows what he or she is talking about when referring to or sharing information about specific things [32], such as the products that they are recommending. The expertise that an influencer has and shares could later contribute to how the attractiveness of the influencer is described.

H4: There is a positive relationship between source expertise and purchase intention.

Gender

Several prior studies have attempted to highlight the importance of gender differences in advertising because gender is widely used as a foundation for market segmentation. Because advertisers target ads to certain demographics, argues that any disparities in how males and females perceive an influencer's credibility should be taken into account. This conclusion suggests that natural gender differences may play a role in the moderating function of purchase intentions, [33] [34].

H5: Gender moderate the relationship between Expertise and purchase intention.
H6: Gender moderate the relationship between Attractiveness and purchase intention.
H7: Gender moderate the relationship between Trustworthiness and purchase intention.
H8: Gender moderate the relationship between Product Match-up and purchase intention.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model is constructed based on the Ohanian model of sources credibility and Kamins, Michael A.'s "match-up" hypothesis (Figure 1). It examines the source credibility of social media influencers that impact customers' purchase intention and the moderating effect of gender.

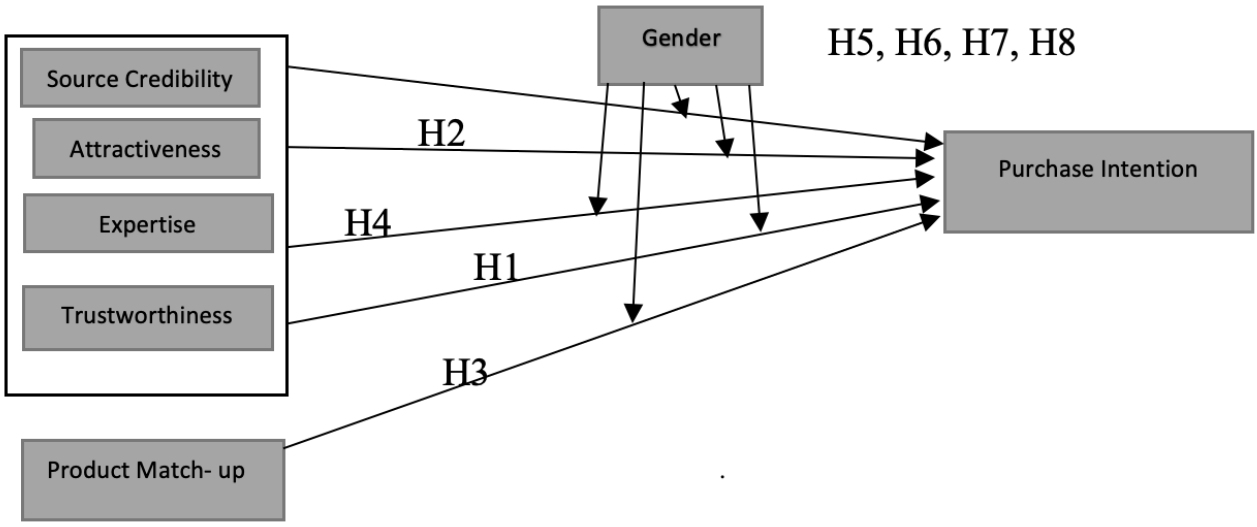


Figure (1) The Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sampling

The current study chose a quantitative approach to investigate social media influencers' sources credibility, characteristics that influence consumer purchase intentions. To accomplish that using convenience sampling techniques, the researchers used online questionnaires to collect responses on the factors. The study's participants were recruited through social groups and were administered online via Google forms. To ensure that the participants had previously interacted with the social media influencers a pre-screening question was developed, asking if participants follow any influencers; those who did not follow influencers were excluded. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. In section one, the respondents need to fill in the demographic information age, gender, and education level. Meantime, in section two the respondents were required to fill in yes, no questions. In the third section, questions addressing independent and dependent variables were asked. Each item was graded on a 5-point Likert scale. A total of 214 participants responded to the screening questions, with 209 of them being eligible and completing the survey.

Measurement

Prior studies were adopted to establish the measures for this study, which were utilized to quantify the impact of customers' perceived credibility to follow influencers on purchase intention. The purchase intention scale was measured by four items derived from [32] research, while the credibility scale was measured by 12 items adapted from [33] research. The measurement for the product match-up was measured using 4 items scales obtained from [34] The Likert Scale was mostly employed in this survey to classify respondents' responses to each of the questions. According to [35] This scale is commonly used and requires respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements. Participants indicated their agreement with a series of statements that measured perceived expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness. Each statement started with “I Consider the Influencer to be” and was measured on a 5-point Likert scale varying from disagreeing to Strongly agree. Expertise was measured with questions like “I Consider the Influencer to be Skilled.”

Attractiveness was measured with questions like “I Consider the Influencer to be Elegant.” Trustworthiness was measured with questions like “I Consider the Influencer to be Honest.”.
As a preliminary evaluation of their performance throughout the entire sample, the initial measures were subjected to several variables and reliability analyses. The construct level reliability, also known as composite reliability, ensures that elements belonging to the same construct have a stronger correlation. Examining the statistical significance of each factor loading and calculating the composite reliability are both parts of the correct measurement model. The scales are far higher than the usually accepted requirements for reliability testing with a value greater than 0.70. [36]

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile with the main population of 209 participants (N=209) as shown in Table 1

Table 1 Demographic profile with the main population of 209 participants. (N=209)

	Percent
Gender	
Male	46.9%
Female	53.1%
Age	
18-24 years old	26.8%
25-34 years old	32.1%
35-44 years old	34.40%
45-54 years old	6.7%
Education Leve	
No schooling completed	0.0%
Some high school, no diploma	14.4%
Associate degree	23.0%
Bachelor’s degree	30.6%
Master’s degree	27.8%
Doctorate degrees	4.3%
Social Websites Daily visit	
Yes	71.3%
No	28.7%

Assessing Measurement Model, the agreeable cutoff for composite reliability is similar for any measure of reliability, also for Cronbach's alpha. Composite reliability varies from 0 to 1, with 1 being perfect estimated reliability. In a model adequate for exploratory purposes, composite reliabilities should be equal to or greater than [35] The model's unidimensional, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were all assessed using a basic principle components analysis on all constructs with item loadings above 0.9.

Table 2 Internal consistency reliability

Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attractiveness	0.962	0.963	0.973	0.899
Expertise	0.956	0.957	0.968	0.884
Product Match-up	0.957	0.958	0.969	0.886
Purchase Intention	0.943	0.943	0.959	0.855
Trustworthiness	0.964	0.965	0.974	0.902

Model estimation provides empirical estimates of the links between indicators and constructs (measurement models) as well as between the constructs themselves (structural model). We can compare the theoretically constructed measurement and structural models with reality, as represented by the sample data, using empirical measurements. To put it another way, we can see how well the theory fits the evidence. The initial focus of the model evaluation is on the measurement models. The researcher can assess the construct measures' reliability and validity by examining their PLS-SEM estimates. Multivariate measurement, in particular, entails employing numerous variables to measure a notion indirectly. Internal consistency dependability is usually the first criterion to be assessed. Cronbach's alpha is a conventional internal consistency criterion that provides a reliability estimate based on the intercorrelations of the observed indicator variables. Cronbach's alpha is based on the assumption that all indicators are equally reliable (i.e., all the indicators have equal outer loadings on the construct). Cronbach Alpha exceeds the 0.7 thresholds, as shown in Figure 3, demonstrating internal consistency reliability [36].

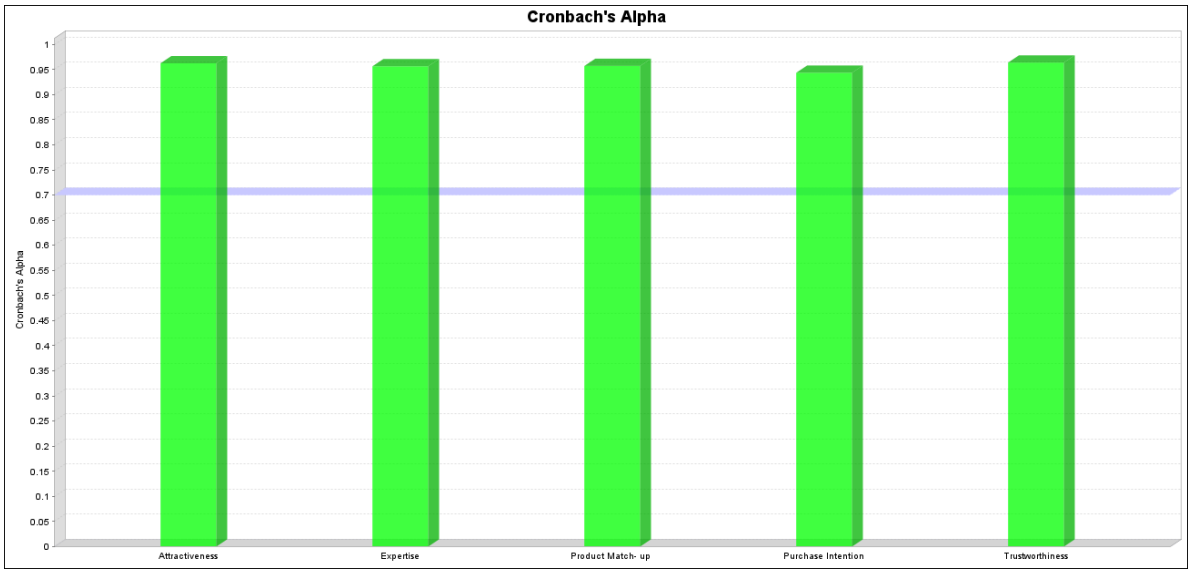


Figure 3: Cronbach Alpha overcome the threshold of 0.7, which is proving internal consistency reliability (Hair, et.al., 2014)

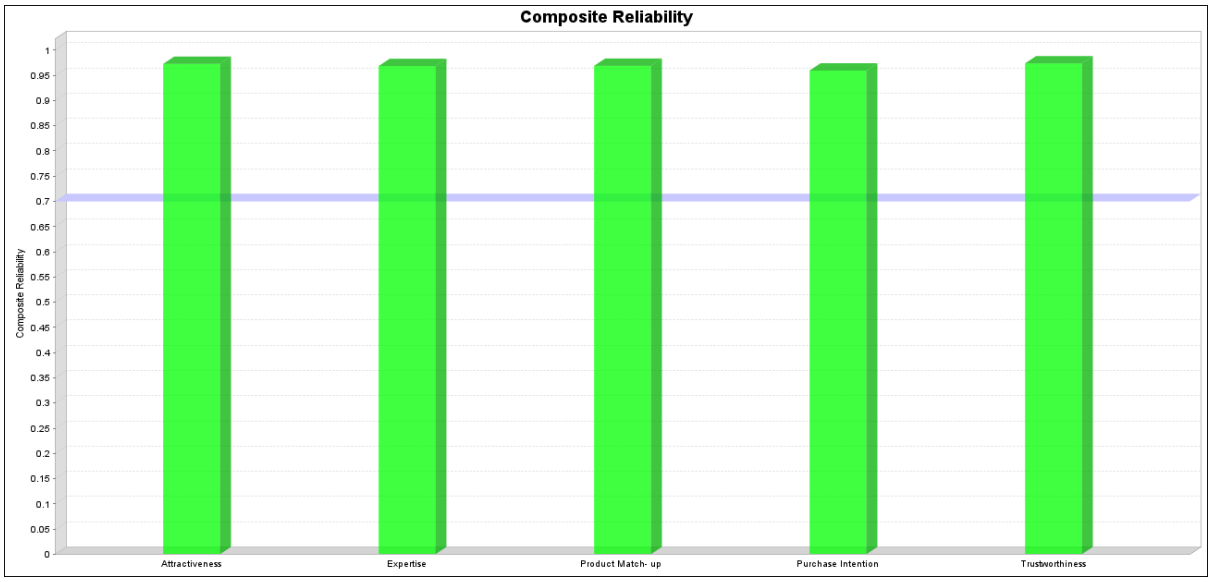


Figure 4: Composite Reliability

Regarding Composite Reliability, as has shown in Figures 4. all constructs meet the required benchmark which is exceeded the suggested 0.70 benchmarks [46].

By empirical standards, discriminant validity refers to how distinct a construct is from other constructs. As a result, establishing a construct implies that it is unique and captures phenomena not captured by other constructs in the model. There have been two proposed measures of discriminant validity (Figure 5).

Fornell-Larcker Criteria (Table 2), compares the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable correlations. Precisely, the square root of the contract is greater than it's the highest correlation, hence, we assume that a construct is unique and captures the phenomena which is not representing by other constructs in the model.

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Table 3 discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Attractiveness	Expertise	Product Match- up	Purchase Intention	Trustworthiness
Attractiveness	0.948				
Expertise	0.194	0.940			
Product Match-up	0.364	0.365	0.941		
Purchase Intention	0.495	0.539	0.523	0.925	
Trustworthiness	0.147	0.553	0.312	0.384	0.950

The results of the structural model can be used to establish how well the empirical data supports the theory/concept and, as a result, whether or not the theory/concept has been empirically confirmed. The structural model's important outputs (i.e., path coefficients and R2

values) are analysed first for this purpose. To determine how well the total regression model fits the study hypotheses, the coefficient of determination is the most often applied metric for assessing structural models (R-value). This is can be achieved by, firstly, examining the adjusted R squared (R2) to examine the percentage of the total variance of the dependent variables explained by the regression model. Whereas R2 tells us how much variation in the dependent variable is estimated for by the regression model, the adjusted value tells us how much variance in the dependent variable would be accounted for if the model had been derived from the population from which the sample was taken. Specifically, it shows the goodness of fit of the model to the population taking into account the sample size and the number of predictors applied. Results over the cut-offs of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 are described as "substantial," "moderate," and "weak," respectively, in [32]. The R-square would be considered moderate in strength or influence in this case. What is “high” is, however, relevant to the field: a number of.25 would be called “high” if the state of the art in the given subject and field has previously led to even lower values.

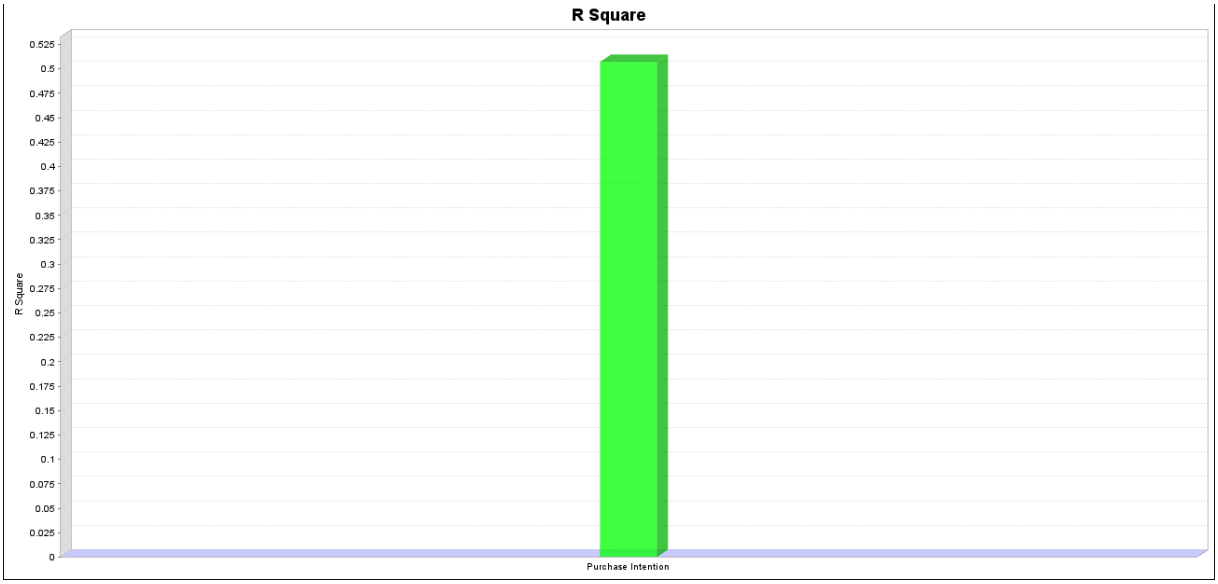


Figure 5: R-value and R2

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Purchase Intention	0.507	0.497

Moderating effect

Since the moderator variable was not continuous, the moderating effect was determined based on group comparisons by multi-group analysis (MGA). The permutation approach was adopted as the analysis did not meet the prerequisite of distributional presumption [37]. [38] proposed that a permutation test was appropriate to determine the effects of categorical variables in the relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs. Moreover, dichotomisation was a common technique used when the moderating variables were divided into two value categories. The level of education had to be transformed into a categorical variable, while no

further refinement was required for gender [39] The dichotomisation process was executed using SmartPLS Multigroup Analysis (MGA).

Table 4 multi-group analysis (MGA)

PLS-MGA

	Path Coefficients-diff (Male - Female)	p-Value original 1-tailed (Male vs Female)	p-Value new (Male vs Female)
Attractiveness -> Purchase Intention	-0.130	0.872	0.257
Expertise -> Purchase Intention	0.200	0.072	0.144
Product Match- up -> Purchase Intention	0.157	0.130	0.261
Trustworthiness -> Purchase Intention	-0.276	0.985	0.029

Based on Table 3, consumer's gender did not moderate the relationship between social media infancies source credibility and purchasing intention. Although gender was not a significant moderator, the comparison between the four components of source credibility revealed that gender only moderated the relationship between Trustworthiness and purchasing intentions with a significant difference of a 0.029 level. Thus, the hypotheses (e.g., H5), (e.g., H6) and (e.g., H8) are rejected. Hypothesis (e.g., H7) is accepted ($p< 0.05$).

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	STDEV	T Statistic	P Value
AT-PI	0.325	0.323	0.056	5.764	0.000
EX-PI	0.347	0.348	0.063	5.522	0.000
PRM-PI	0.260	0.259	0.067	3.911	0.000
TRW-PI	0.061	0.061	0.066	0.929	0.353

Hypotheses testing. Table 5.

Regarding hypotheses testing the table 4 has shown that there is not significant relationship between trustworthy and customers purchase intention, thus, Hypothesis (e.g., H1) is rejected ($T=0.929$, $p>0.05$). Hypothesis (e.g., H2) that attractiveness has a significant impact on customers purchase intention is accepted with significance level $p <0.05$; $T=5.764$). Hypothesis (e.g., H3) that is stated product match-up has a significant relationship with consumer purchase intention is accepted ($p<0.05$; $T=3.911$). The next hypothesis (e.g., H4) is accepted as well ($p<0.05$; $T=5.522$), we can state that expertise has a significant relationship with consumer purchase intention.

Managerial Application

This study added to academic knowledge as well as managerial implications on the topic of social media influencers, who are seen as a key component of marketing in the future. The researcher adopted the source credibility theory and match-up hypotheses from the marketing sector to increase the knowledge of the relationship between the effectiveness of social media influencers and consumer purchase intention in this study.

The study contributed to the body of knowledge of digital endorsement by investigating social media influencers' source credibility under the moderating effect of gender in Malaysia, as suggested by previous researchers [40].

This study provides an answer to a question that was not answered in previous studies: Dos all source credibility dimensions attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, including the match-up hypotheses, explain the influential impact on customers purchasing intentions under the moderating effect of gender? The results of the quantitative analysis showed that source credibility dimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and product match-up have an influential impact on consumers purchasing intentions except for trustworthiness, which is conflicting with previous studies' findings that showed trustworthiness has an influential impact on purchasing intentions. The study also revealed that gender did not have a moderating effect on social media influencers' source credibility except for trustworthiness. in other words, this study showed that social media influencers' source credibility can drive positive consumers' purchasing intentions. On the other hand, this paper did not support the path between trustworthiness impact toward purchasing intentions as shown by [41] and endorsement scholars in the set of celebrity endorsers [42] [43]

From a managerial point of view, the findings of this study generate new insights for businesses willing to develop an Influencer Marketing strategy understanding, this is essential for improving marketing strategies and establishing personal relationships. As a result, knowing an influencer's perceived credibility is critical to develop new communication methods that meet the audience.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

This thesis demonstrates the utility of the findings and exposes a substantial advancement in the research on the relationship between customers and their perceived credibility of social media influencers, as well as the impact on purchase intention. There are, however, some limitations. The sampling method, which uses a non-probabilistic convenience sample, is a key weakness of this study, as it cannot be considered a representative sample of the community [44]. However, the possibility of a larger and more diversified sample could increase the reliability of the results. Also, as this study is quantitative, a more qualitative component could improve its viability on a qualitative approach, strictly speaking, using focus group discussions and interviews with marketers or brand managers who want to use social media and its influencers as a platform to engage customers with their brands; a finer understanding of this topic would be possible. Although, in this study, the dimensions employed to measure the impact on purchase intention were customers' perceived credibility of an Influencer, particularly its perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and product match-up. As a result, it would be great if future academics investigated what motivates social media users to interact with influencers on social media and then applied their findings to other popular social media platforms like Facebook or blogs. Exploring this degree of information would be an excellent addition for marketers. Finally, determining how consumers perceive influencers' credibility and its impact on purchase intent is critical for marketers building strategies on the Social network. Through identifying the differences between female and male Social media, marketers can more efficiently customize marketing strategies for the target they are addressing.

CONCLUSION

This paper contributes to the model studying the effect of social media influencer source credibility on consumers purchasing intentions and the moderating effect of gender. This research also introduces variable scales to the model, which is substantially suitable for Malaysian marketing scholars and applications. The authors emphasize the imperative value of influencer credibility from the results of influencer marketing effects on customer purchasing intentions. Also, it has a beneficial impact on influencer marketing to generate good content and to choose a suitable influencer for the product. Furthermore, research results indicate that businesses, communications, and marketers can gain insights into the impacts of influencers on customer purchasing intentions to build marketing strategies that suit consuming patterns and effectively leverage influencer marketing. Also, the advancement of influencer marketing would help save more advertisement and promotional expenses than conventional marketing activities, thereby maximizing the benefit of the business. Also, this paper gave practitioners an overview of which of the Source-Credibility Model criteria apply to influencers and their power.

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