

Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Decisions in the Fashion Industry: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of social media has revolutionized marketing strategies, with influencer marketing emerging as a pivotal force in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase behaviours-particularly within the fashion industry. This study examines the impact of influencer credibility, including attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and content usefulness, on consumer purchase decisions in Malaysia's fashion sector. Additionally, the study investigates whether demographic factors such as age, gender, and income moderate these relationships. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected from 400 social media users via structured questionnaires. The analysis reveals that all dimensions of influencer credibility significantly and positively influence consumers' purchasing decisions. However, regression results show that age, gender, and income do not significantly moderate the relationships between influencer credibility or content usefulness and consumer purchase decisions. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Malaysia's fashion industry is consistent across different demographic groups. The study provides actionable insights for fashion industry stakeholders, emphasizing the critical role of credible influencers and valuable content in driving consumer engagement and purchases, while also contributing to the broader understanding of digital marketing strategies by clarifying the limited role of demographic moderators in this context.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, fashion industry, consumer purchase decisions, social media users.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

The growth of social media usage in this era has led to digital transformation, especially in user-generated content, and formed huge online communities globally. Nowadays, users prefer to share their experiences and feedback online, which encourages positive user content to attract potential buyers. According to Sardar & Dutta (2020), blogging among influencers has been suggested as more cost-effective to deliver personal insights, share experiences, recommendations, and reach wider social media users, including platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Despite encouraging businesses to be more innovative (Hamedani S. S. et al., 2024; Lumat Y., 2023), influencers on these social media platforms influence the consumer's behaviour and purchasing decisions.

According to Childers et al. (2019), the influencers are the experts from the sector and professionals which using social media to display their knowledge, experience and authority in such a way that this qualities by the utility transmitted, can have a psychological or emotional impact on the audience with the determination that that influence by it fall for certain content. In the fashion sector, influencer marketing is a powerful means for firms to enhance the product presence formation of the target market, as the lifestyle might be aspired to (Conick, 2018; Varsamis, 2018; Noyan, 2017).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, influencer marketing plays a huge role in marketing strategies, especially in the fashion industry (Singh, 2024). This approach has been increasingly employed for its ability to reach specific audiences and to create genuine consumer relationships (Yerasani et al., 2019). For social media stars such as this, who include bloggers, vloggers, and model-selling Instagram pin-ups, platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have meant they can reach more people than brands ever dreamed, and as a result, they wield consumer power and shopping influence. Campbell et al. (2020) stated that fashion brands have collaborated with marketing influencers to create content to encourage an aspirational lifestyle in line with their target market.

Statista (2024) and ECBD (2025) projected that Malaysia's fashion e-commerce market will reach USD 5.24 billion by 2025. This will be further projected to become USD6.51 billion in 2029 due to a huge rise in the influence of social media and influencer marketing. A report by Cube Asia (2024) found that 59% of Malaysian consumers make purchases based on mega influencer recommendations, with 65% and 62% influenced in the fashion and beauty sectors, respectively. Influencers, particularly on platforms like Instagram, have become trusted trendsetters by creating authentic content that shapes consumer behaviour and drives sales (Bansal P. Singh & Bansal A., 2024). Although influencer marketing's impact in Malaysia is slightly less pronounced than in neighbouring countries, factors such as brand credibility, celebrity endorsement, and social norms strongly affect purchase intentions, especially among youth. Industry forecasts predict continued growth in influencer marketing, underscoring its vital role in Malaysia's evolving fashion industry (Cube Asia, 2024).

Malaysia's fashion market exemplifies this trend, with Statista (2024) projecting revenue to reach USD 2.41 billion in 2025 and an annual growth rate of 8.64%, culminating in a market volume of USD 3.35 billion by 2029. This robust growth is closely linked to increased consumer purchases facilitated by social media platforms. According to Bernama (2024), celebrities and major influencers significantly impact purchasing decisions in Malaysia, influencing 62% and 61% of consumers, respectively. The fashion and beauty sectors are particularly affected, accounting for 65% and 61% of purchases.

According to Tiwari et al. (2024), social media has shaped the new consumer behaviour by putting influencer marketing in a key role for brand engagement in the fashion industry. Compared to traditional advertising, influencer marketing influences consumer purchase decisions through their credibility and trust of social media personalities. Nonetheless, influencer authenticity, ethical issues, and consumer scepticism about sponsored content remain relevant (Kumar et al., 2024). Saturation of influencer-based promotions also addresses serious questions about sustainability, especially for long-term consumer loyalty, when audiences may become fatigued and sceptical of free unlimited content (Omotunde Dada, 2024).

Problem Statement

Despite the widespread adoption of influencer marketing, its overall impact in Malaysia is somewhat less pronounced than in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of local consumer dynamics (Venciute et al., 2023). While all these factors are worrying, a strong examination of the effectiveness and limitations of influencer marketing strategies is also needed to offer brands practical support today to build authentic consumer engagement and a competitive edge in a crowded digital marketplace. This study seeks to fill important gaps in the literature by examining how demographic factors, such as age, gender, and income, influence consumer purchasing decisions in the context of Malaysia's social media-driven fashion industry.

This study will examine the Malaysian fashion industry and the advantages and disadvantages of influencer marketing, providing key insights into the hits and misses. The scope of this study includes the evaluation of the social media influencer's credibility, trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and content usefulness on consumer purchasing habits and consumer relationships. Equally, this study brings out the research gaps, such as the use of quantitative methods, more exploration of the relationships between influencers and followers, and increased clarity and authenticity in consumers' decision-making process in making purchase decisions (Venciute et al., 2023). Findings from this study will help fashion manufacturers, marketers, and policy makers' influencer marketing strategies in this complex digital environment and build sustainability in their relationships with consumers.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of influencers' credibility (attractiveness, expertise trustworthiness and content usefulness) on consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.
2. To examine the moderating effect of demographic factors (age, gender and income) on the relationship between influencers marketing and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the dimensions of influencer credibility namely attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and content usefulness influence consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia?
2. Do demographic factors (age, gender, and income) significantly moderate the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer purchase decisions in the Malaysian fashion industry?

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Influencer Marketing

Tafesse & Wien (2018) stated that influencers are also known as opinion leaders who have strong public reputations via online interactions through their posts, photos, videos, and virtual engagement. All their activities on social media will build their online personas or "human brands" (Kay et al., 2020) and allow them to build trust and demonstrate their expertise in the fields of fashion, lifestyle, sports, food, and many others. In addition, according to Zniva R. et al. (2023), the influencers are also identified by the literature as social influencers, internet celebrities, digital opinion leaders, or market mavens.

The term "Influencer Marketing" was first introduced in a book by Brown and Hayes (2008). Social media marketing has emerged as the latest and most popular trend, replacing traditional marketing tools like television, newspapers, and magazines, which are costly and have limited reach (Todor, 2016). Consequently, social media has become an integral part of daily life. Influencer marketing has become increasingly important, with brands leveraging social media influencers for promotion. As a result, assessing its effectiveness in driving brand awareness and sales has become essential (Durmishi & Durmishi, 2024; Hollebeek, 2019; Armstrong, 2009).

The rapid rise of social media influencers has made influencer marketing a key strategy for businesses (Vrontis et al., 2021). It involves identifying and engaging influencers to create impactful brand conversations (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer marketing is effective due to the trust influencers build with their followers, making their recommendations valuable for potential customers (Leung et al., 2022). Additionally, it integrates marketing, public relations, digital marketing, and social media for effective brand communication (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Gomez et al., 2019).

Several studies have explored influencer marketing which is including the one done by Chatzigeorgiou (2017), who found that influencers promoting lifestyle brands are most effective when they are authentic, confident, and interactive. The previous study done by Lim et al. (2017), it is only focused on the influence of efficiency and credibility in the context of product endorsements. In the study done by Sudha & Sheen (2017) on the effects of influencer marketing found that consumers will assume that they need the product effectively using the social media as it will exert persuasive power on consumers to make decision to purchase the products.

Purchase Decision

According to Morwitz (2014) purchase intention refers to the cognitive behaviour related to consumer intention to buy a specific brand's products, and it is closely related to the purchase decision process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). In addition to that, Ajina and Tijani (2022) defined purchase intention as an individual's conscious plan to purchase a brand. While most of the studies focused on knowledge of consumer behaviour, there is a study

done by Kotler & Armstrong (2021) on the consumer decision process of need recognition, details information required on the brand, any alternative evaluation, decision to purchase and post-purchase behaviour.

According to Hughes et al. (2019), the ways of social media influencers have impacted consumers' engagement with a specific brand through the ways that social media influencers communicated and utilized their online reputation. Lou et al. (2019) and Weismueller et al. (2020) found that influencers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise play a crucial role in purchasing decisions. In addition, Koay et al. (2020) indicated that influencer appeal is another significant factor that leads to consumers' purchase intentions. Past research done by De Veirman et al. (2020) stated that influencer credibility has a positive effect on attitude toward the brand. On the other hand, Koay K. Y. et al. (2020) stated that the types of social media platforms selected by users changed over time with their age, which shows the development process. Overall, all those findings show that social media influences can influence how users perceive brands, which can lead to an increase in online purchases.

Attractiveness

Attractiveness is defined as an internal part of expressions that inspire curiosity or engagement, while the human physical attributes are also considered (Yilmazdogan et al., 2021). On the other side, Martiningsih et al. (2022) point out that facial attractiveness only produces a physical response without apparent physical traits. Lou et al. (2019) found that followers trust influencers' branded posts when the influencer is attractive and similar to them, even if they do not know their physical traits. Balaban et al. (2019) also said influencers can attract large audiences and therefore, sway their opinions and behaviours because of their attractiveness. The results from previous studies show that attractiveness is a complex concept that can include aesthetic appeal, desirability, the ability to engage, and sway the behaviour of others.

Meanwhile, Guo et al. (2020) found that the attractiveness of Korean celebrities significantly impacts Chinese consumers' intention to purchase fashion items. According to Trivedi (2021), the celebrity's attractiveness also influenced impulse buying. Venciute et al. (2023) have also suggested that influencer attractiveness and recognized popularity on social media have an even greater connection to influencing consumer attitudes and intent to buy. Therefore, attractiveness is important in today's influencer marketing from the consumer's perspective, which led to this study.

The use of physical attractiveness among influencers nowadays has become an important strategy for marketing due to the strong influence on the consumers' attitudes (Ohanian, 1990; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). According to Coutinho et al. (2023), advertisers used the attractiveness of the celebrity to increase consumers' intention to purchase. The celebrity attractiveness facilitates impulse buying (Khalid et al., 2018) while the attractiveness strengthens the consumers' developed towards brands that lead them to purchase the brands (Koay et al., 2021). This shows that attractiveness has the power to influence consumers' behaviour, and it's important for the company to identify influencers with attractiveness. Therefore, this study will test the following hypothesis:

H1: Influencer's attractiveness significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Expertise

Sokolova & Kefi, (2020); Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019) stated that expertise is a celebrity's perceived experience, knowledge, and credibility of being a source of influence that can increase consumer trust in the message conveyed (Su et al., 2021). More than attractiveness, expertise reinforces the credibility of influencers and influences audience perceptions (Balaban et al., 2019). In the end, influencer expertise is important to building trust between the influencer's audience and the influencer's connections, and in influencing attitudes and behaviours surrounding endorsed products and brands.

Weismueller et al. (2020) point out that influencers who display expertise in their posts or profiles encourage audiences' intention to purchase. Meanwhile, Liu (2022) states that skills and knowledge of the endorser can increase trust among consumers, which leads to positive purchasing decisions. De Cicco et al. (2020) in their study mentioned that the products endorsed by the influencers appeared to be more credible and knowledgeable,

while less credible endorsing products that were not relevant to their image. With the influencer's credibility and knowledge on the products they endorsed, this will increase the confidence in consumers, which will influence them to make a purchase.

In addition to that, Weismueller et al. (2020) also mentioned that the consumers believed that the influencer's expertise, such as the knowledge on the products and credibility, is important in influencing them to make a purchase. Moreover, Anand (2019) indicates that influencer expertise, such as celebrity, can be a main factor in influencing the consumer to make a decision that results in a more informed purchase. Additionally, Chetioui et al. (2020) indicated that consumers are likely to trust and accept the recommendations of influencers who are experts about the brands. Overall, the influencer's expertise is a key factor that leads to consumers' behaviour and purchasing decisions. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H2: Influencer's expertise significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Trustworthiness

Ohanian (1990) and Henkel et al. (2011) stated that trustworthiness, which is considered honesty, reliability, and credibility, is very important. The consumer's decision to purchase is very closely related to their trust in the influencer (Alhussain et al., 2021). In addition, Benito et al. (2020) stated that trust plays an important role in ensuring the success of promotion between influencers and consumers, which can reduce the negative expression towards the brand.

Chetioui et al. (2020) suggested that the followers' attitudes and purchasing intention and influenced by how they trust and credible the influencers. However, De Veirman et al. (2017) stated that trustworthiness is crucial in shaping the consumers' perceptions through the influencers' content that starts to establish relationships, engagement, and brand loyalty. A previous study done by Balaban et al. (2019) reported that trust and knowledge were found to be important points to be successful for the influencers. Meanwhile, influencers who have gained the trust will easily lead to consumer acceptance, especially in their fashion advice and endorsements (Jin et al., 2019). Therefore, brands can use the influencer's credibility to enhance their image, build the consumers' trust, build engagement, and increase sales. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H3: Influencer's trustworthiness significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Content Usefulness

Venciute et al. (2023) define content usefulness as its ability to aid decision-making, helping influencers build trust and provide reliable information. Influencer marketing relies on authentic, engaging content rather than overt advertising (Balaban et al., 2020). Social media users interact with brand-related content for information, entertainment, and relaxation (Terho et al., 2022). By creating relevant and valuable content, influencers strengthen connections, boost engagement, and foster audience loyalty.

Engagement is a key measure of campaign success, reflecting strong connections between influencers, followers, and brands (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Useful content enhances consumer engagement, driving interactions and influencing purchasing decisions. Brand et al. (2019) highlight that content usefulness shapes customer beliefs and behaviours, making it essential in influencer marketing strategies.

Venciute et al. (2023) highlight that the perceived value of branded influencer content strongly influences purchase intention. Informative posts build trust, enhance brand awareness, and positively impact buying decisions (Lou et al., 2019). Kumar et al. (2023) emphasise that compelling content shapes consumer decision-making. By aligning content with audience needs, influencers drive engagement, foster trust, and guide informed purchasing choices in the fashion industry. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H4: Content useful has a significant impact on influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry

among social media users in Malaysia.

Moderation of Demographic Factors

Recent marketing literature emphasizes the role of moderating factors in shaping consumer behavior by influencing the relationship between variables (Chan, 2022). Pandey et al. (2019) found that online shopping behavior is affected by demographics, social factors, and shopping experience. Empirical evidence supports that demographic factors significantly impact purchase decisions (Ali et al., 2020).

Moderating Effect of Age

Age plays a key role in influencer marketing effectiveness, particularly in the fashion industry. Younger consumers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, are more influenced by physically attractive influencers, associating them with social status and aspirational lifestyles (Lou et al., 2019). According to De Rezende Pinto et al. (2017), adolescents are fond to attracted to media celebrities that later shape their purchasing behaviour. Contradict to that, older consumers preferred practicality and authenticity of the brands rather than the physical appeal in the endorsements (Wiedmann et al., 2020). Kocot et al. (2023) in their study found that the younger generations rely more on visuals in the social media platform, which led them to frequently shop online. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H5: Age moderates the relationship between influencer's attractiveness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry on social media users in Malaysia.

Age has a moderating effect on how consumers identify value with influencer expertise. According to Casalo et al. (2020), younger consumers are interested in influencers who can provide input on new fashion trends or the latest related information. With regards to older consumers, Sokolova et al. (2020) found that they rely on practical expertise and prefer influencers who endorse timeless fashion style rather than the value of newness of content. There is research done by Hult et al. (2019) that found that different technologies usage also builds online shopping behaviour across age groups. Older consumers are more attracted to the style that influenced them to the influencers' expertise in the brand's quality and durability (Hwang et al., 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H6: Age moderates the relationship between influencer's expertise with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Age is the moderator between an influencer's trustworthiness and purchase decisions. According to Djafarova et al. (2021) and Lou et al. (2019), despite their familiarity with social media, young consumers are sceptical of the endorsements by influencers but more trust the peer reviews and authenticity of the endorsements. On the other side, the older consumers are believed to have on strong consumer influencer relationship, which is more conscientious and focuses on long-term, reliable, and authentic endorsements (Hwang et al., 2021). Among the millennials, they place more trust in the influencers based on the perceived likeness when they are the same age, which makes age an essential element to perceived credibility and trustworthiness of the influencers (Ernis, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H7: Age moderates the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Age affected how the usefulness of the content impacted consumer purchase decisions and identified the extent to which various demographics utilize completely different social media platforms. Supported by Mardhiah et al. (2023) and De Veirman et al. (2020), younger consumers prioritize interactive content and visual content such as tutorials and live streaming of clothes that can provide real-time advice, as they are more tech-savvy. Meanwhile, older consumers favour detailed and informative content that includes thorough reviews about the products purchased as well as advice on the fashion details (Lim et al., 2017). According to Han et al. (2025), social media platform such as Instagram and YouTube provides suitable information for all age demographics, while SnapChat and TikTok dominate younger consumers. Thus, the

following hypothesis will be tested:

H8: Age moderates the relationship between influencer's content usefulness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Moderating Effect of Gender

Gender plays a crucial role in moderating consumer responses to influencer marketing, particularly in the fashion industry (Djafarova et al., 2021). Female consumers are more influenced by attractive influencers, perceiving them as aspirational role models, while male consumers value female influencers' appeal but prefer male influencers for fashion advice (Djafarova et al., 2017; Sokolova et al., 2020). However, Sumathi et al. (2023) suggest that gender does not significantly impact the perceived attractiveness and credibility of influencers, as attractiveness correlates more with brand awareness and purchase intention, particularly in the cosmetics industry. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H9: Gender moderates the relationship between influencer's attractiveness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Expertise significantly influences consumer decisions, with gender moderating its impact differently (Thing, 2021). Female consumers tend to prefer influencers with high expertise in beauty and fashion, valuing specialized knowledge and skills (Hwang et al., 2021). On the other side, Hudders et al. (2021) stated that male consumers prefer expertise in products such as technology and sport fashion that focus on functionality and practicality. Therefore, this highlights the different consumer's preferences based on gender in influencer marketing. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H10: Gender moderates the relationship between influencer's expertise with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Talha et al. (2024) stated that, in establishing influencer credibility, trustworthiness is also crucial as age can play a very important moderating factor on purchase decisions. Female consumers are believed to be more influenced by celebrity endorsements and more likely to trust influencers when they favour authenticity that makes them feel a high level of trust before making any decision to purchase (Marhaeni et al., 2022). Meanwhile, male consumers believed that trustworthiness was also important compared to influencer authenticity. In terms of consumption patterns and levels of brand loyalty, compared with females, males may not consider influencer authenticity to be as important (Casalo et al., 2020). Haritha (2023) further stated that the household income and gender also moderate the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention, therefore, it helps marketers to identify their audience for directing advertisements to. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H11: Gender moderates the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

According to research done by Ozdemir et al. (2019), gender played a role in consumers' behaviour, where females show higher impulsivity in purchasing, especially in fashion and beauty products. In research done by De Veirman et al. (2020), gender also influences how consumers perceive content usefulness, where females express the most useful contents when the details of fashion tips and reviews are shared, but male consumers more satisfied with key features and benefits of the products as they are more utilitarian fashion consumption. Contrastingly, male consumers will be more straightforward in content that focuses on key product features and benefits, while female consumers normally focus on review content in detail and practicality (Shuai et al., 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H12: Gender moderates the relationship between influencer's content usefulness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Moderating Effect of Income Level

Income levels have a strong moderating effect on the various consumer responses to influencer advertising.

According to Sokolova et al. (2020), higher income consumers will be more attracted to brand prestige and alignment with luxury clothing fashion over influencers' attractiveness, while lower income consumers will react positively to attractiveness as a main aspiration ideal. In addition, Balaban (2020) stated that those consumers with higher disposable incomes are attracted to high-end designs, while those with lower incomes will mainly focus on cost in making their buying decisions. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H13: Income level moderates the relationship between influencer's attractiveness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Expertise plays an important part in consumers' purchase decisions, and income levels moderate the level of importance. According to Lou et al. (2019), higher-income consumers prefer to look at the influencer's expertise and authenticity before they plan on whom to purchase, meanwhile the lower-income consumers see both expertise and budget-friendly advice as important to decide on purchases. Income and education levels are linked positively to the number of online shopping purchases made (Nguyen et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2019). However, some research indicates demographic characteristics such as income are not directly linked with online purchase decisions (Vajjhala et al., 2019). Thus, to see whether the result will be different in this study, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H14: Income level moderates the relationship between influencer's expertise with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Income level appears to play a considerable moderating role in the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention. Reinikainen et al. (2020) stated that while purchasing a product, the higher-income consumers show more care about influencers' trustworthiness and knowledge compared to the lower-income consumers, who rely on trusted influencers due to financial caution. When their financial position is stable, it seems consumers are more inclined to shop online for convenience when the concern level lowers (Kocot et al., 2023). In addition, Haritha (2023) stated that income level plays a considerable role in online buying behaviour, as trust is attached to a celebrity endorsement of a product or service that leads to the intention to make a purchase. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H15: Income level moderates the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Income levels moderate how useful content affects consumers' purchase decisions. Lim et al. (2017) and Tiruwa et al. (2018) found that influencers specializing in these areas are very influential, as lower-income consumers prefer to do more comparison shopping, as they want more details about the products and practical advice. On the other side, higher-income consumers are more about the product than the content. In the research done by Halefoglu et al. (2022), the result shows that lower-income consumers are influenced more by content as well as purchase brands' products at a higher rate than higher-income consumers. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H16: Income level moderates the relationship between influencer's content usefulness with consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia.

Theoretical Framework

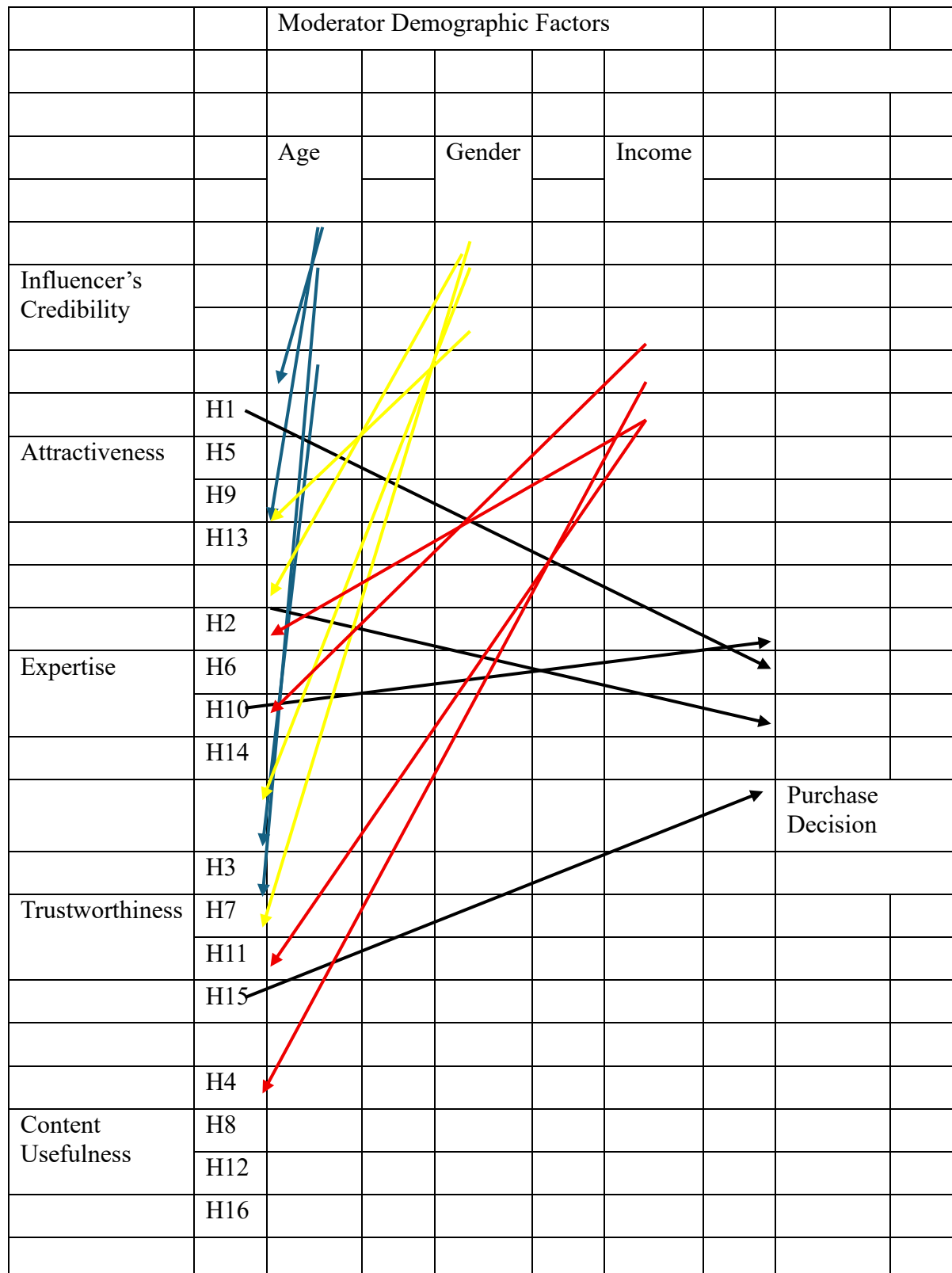
This study is anchored in Source Credibility Theory, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of a persuasive message is largely determined by the perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of the message source (Ohanian, 1990). These three components are central to the influencer attributes examined in this research. To further explain how consumers process these persuasive messages, the study also draws on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). The ELM suggests that consumers evaluate marketing content either through a central route—focusing on message quality, such as content usefulness—or through a peripheral route, influenced by surface cues like the influencer's appearance or popularity. These two theories collectively provide a solid conceptual foundation for understanding how

influencer credibility affects consumer purchase decisions and how demographic factors such as age, gender, and income may moderate this influence.

Conceptual Framework

The above conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this study. This conceptual framework provides a platform for researchers to analyse and draw conclusions based on the relationships and interactions between the presented variables.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework developed by authors



The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 was modified to fit the research purpose for this research study. The framework illustrates the relationship between the independent variables (Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Content Usefulness) and the dependent variable (Purchase Decision), while also providing the moderating variables of age, gender, and income.

Research Methodology

To fulfil the objectives of this research, a quantitative research methodology was employed to examine how influencer credibility, defined by trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and content usefulness, and demographic factors such as age, gender, and income, affect consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry. A structured online questionnaire was distributed to multiple social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. The study included categorical measures for demographics, whilst the other variables were measured using five-point Likert-type scales. Influencer credibility was measured based on established scales from previous research, and purchase decisions were measured using a four-item scale.

A structured Google Form is used to collect the data related to the demographic variables through WhatsApp, and a five-point Likert scale is used to measure the other variables. Participants are fully informed about the study, and their anonymity is protected. Data collection occurs from April 12 to June 26, 2024, with responses securely stored and analysed using Google Forms and IBM SPSS Version 29.0. This approach enables efficient, reliable analysis of how influencer credibility and demographic factors impact purchase decisions in the fashion industry influencer marketing.

RESULTS

The following findings are based on research conducted during the survey on the impact of influence on marketing on consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry.

Demographic Profiles

This study examined Malaysian social media users who actively engage with fashion-related influencer content on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and others. Using a non-probabilistic sampling approach, 395 valid responses were collected. The largest age group among respondents was 31–35 years (22%), while the smallest was 51–55 years (7.1%). Female participants made up the majority at 55.9%. In terms of income, most respondents earned more than RM 8,001 per month (29.4%), with the lowest representation in the RM 2,001–4,000 bracket (13.9%). Instagram was identified as the most popular platform for following fashion content, preferred by 41.8% of respondents. These findings offer valuable insights into the demographic characteristics and platform preferences of Malaysia's fashion-focused social media audience.

Reliability Test

Reported by Urbach & Ahleman (2010), reliability is defined as “the extent to which a set of variables is consistent with what it is supposed to measure”. The purposive sampling is an effective tool of influencer marketing study as it allows the researchers the power to select specific individuals as a sample with specific characteristics linked to the study. This includes engagement with influencers on social media, exposure to content related to fashion and behaviour that relates to purchasing habits or information and knowledge from influencers. This approach confirms that the sample is complying with the focus of the investigation on influencer credibility characteristics and marketing with regard to demographic factors. Moreover, Koay et al. (2020) identified that purposive sampling allows a researcher to include people with contrasting demographic characteristics with differences in ages, gender and incomes.

The purposive sampling is a useful tool in influencer marketing research as it allows the researcher to be intentional about who is chosen as a subset of individuals that possess certain characteristics related to the research study. According to Koay et al. (2020), this includes engaging with influencers on social media, following fashion-related content and having purchasing behaviour influenced by influencers. This method

establishes that the sample is conforming to the focus of the investigation on influencer credibility attributes and marketing related to demographic factors. In addition, purposive sampling also allows the researcher to include individuals of diverse demographic characteristics such as differences in age, gender and incomes (Koay et al. (2020).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Case Processing Summary	N	%	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Independent Variables					
Attractiveness	Valid	395	100.0	0.877	4
	Excluded	0	.0		
	Total	395	100.0		
Expertise	Valid	395	100.0	0.893	4
	Excluded	0	.0		
	Total	395	100.0		
Trustworthiness	Valid	395	100.0	0.942	4
	Excluded	0	.0		
	Total	395	100.0		
Content Usefulness	Valid	395	100.0	0.909	4
	Excluded	0	.0		
	Total	395	100.0		
Dependent Variables					
Purchase Decision	Valid	395	100.0	0.925	4
	Excluded	0	.0		
	Total	395	100.0		

A reliability analysis was carried out, and Table 1 outlines the reliability analysis outcomes. All Cronbach's alpha values were desirable, indicating very good to excellent internal consistency across all constructs: attractiveness (0.877), expertise (0.893), trustworthiness (0.942), content usefulness (0.909), and purchase decisions (0.925). According to Hair et al. (2017), reliability scores between 0.80 – 0.90 are quite good and measures scales are considered solid. The results show that perceived influencer's attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and content usefulness do influence consumers ' purchase decisions. These results emphasise the importance of content relevance, which is an important aspect of influencer credibility and consumers' behaviour where influencers are used as a strategic option across demographic segments (Hair et al., 2017).

Correlation Analysis

In Table 3 below, the Pearson Correlation Analysis identified the outcomes of the relationships between independent variables and purchase decision. Correlation analysis, according to Zikmund et al. (2013), shows the strength of the relationship among the independent and dependent variables. If the correlation coefficient (r) has a value of -1, then a strong negative relationship is established. If the correlation coefficient (r) is near 0 then no linear correlation exists between the variables.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		Attractiveness	Expertise	Trustworthiness	Content Usefulness	Purchase Decision
Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.683**	.589**	.575**	.541**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	n	395	395	395	395	395
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.683**	1	.764**	.720**	.739**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	n	395	395	395	395	395
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	.589**	.764**	1	.704**	.730**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	n	395	395	395	395	395
Content Usefulness	Pearson Correlation	.575**	.720**	.704**	1	.808**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	n	395	395	395	395	395
Purchase Decision	Pearson Correlation	.541**	.739**	.730**	.808**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	n	395	395	395	395	395

Refer to Table 2, the analysis reveals significant positive correlations between several key influencer attributes and consumer purchasing decisions within the Malaysian fashion industry. Specifically, attractiveness ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.01$), expertise ($r = 0.739$, $p < 0.01$), and trustworthiness ($r = 0.730$, $p < 0.01$) all demonstrate a strong, positive relationship with consumer purchase decisions. Furthermore, content usefulness exhibits the strongest correlation ($r = 0.808$, $p < 0.01$), indicating its important role in driving consumer behaviour. These findings suggest that Malaysian consumers are more likely to make purchases when they perceive influencers as attractive, knowledgeable, and trustworthy, and when the content they provide is deemed useful.

Regression Analysis

According to Cohen et al. (2003), regression analysis is a method based on the assumption of linearity between independent and dependent variables, which allows us to define and accurately model the relationship and also helps ensure the consistent distribution of residuals. In this study, regression analysis was used to investigate the relationships between influencer credibility (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness), content usefulness, and consumers' purchase decisions in the Malaysian fashion sector and among social media users. Furthermore, the analysis also investigated whether the relationships vary by age, gender, and income.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Influencers' Credibility (Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Content Usefulness), Age and Consumers' Purchase Decision

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.137	.153		-.896	.371
	Attractiveness	-.042	.041	-.039	-1.032	.303
	Expertise	.259	.055	.232	4.742	<.001
	Trustworthiness	.216	.045	.214	4.822	<.001
	Content Usefulness	.594	.048	.513	12.369	<.001
	Age Range	.000	.012	-.001	-.022	.982

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Influencers' Credibility (Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Content Usefulness), Gender and Consumers' Purchase Decision

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.050	.156		-.319	.750
	Attractiveness	-.043	.041	-.039	-1.053	.293
	Expertise	.258	.054	.231	4.740	<.001
	Trustworthiness	.221	.045	.220	4.925	<.001
	Content Usefulness	.587	.048	.507	12.150	<.001
	Age Range	-.051	.048	-.029	-1.063	.289

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Influencers' Credibility (Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Content Usefulness), Income Level and Consumers' Purchase Decision

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.135	.140		-.965	.335
	Attractiveness	-.043	.041	-.039	-1.034	.302
	Expertise	.259	.055	.232	4.752	<.001
	Trustworthiness	.216	.045	.215	4.816	<.001
	Content Usefulness	.594	.048	.513	12.397	<.001
	Age Range	-.001	.017	-.002	-.076	.939

The study shows that age, gender, and income level did not significantly moderate the relationships between influencer characteristics (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and content usefulness) and consumer purchase decisions among Malaysian social media users in the fashion industry. All related hypotheses (H5–H16) were rejected, with consistently non-significant coefficients (age: $\beta = -0.001$, $p = 0.982$; gender: $\beta = -0.029$, $p = 0.289$; income: $\beta = -0.002$, $p = 0.939$). Despite previous studies suggesting demographic differences in responses to influencers, the findings indicate that the influence of key influencer attributes on purchase decisions is consistent across different age groups, genders, and income levels. This outcome aligns with the theory of persuasive communication, suggesting that source characteristics may impact consumers similarly across demographic categories.

Summary of Hypotheses

Number	Hypotheses	Result
H1	Influencer's attractiveness positively influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Accepted
H2	Influencer's expertise positively influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Accepted
H3	Influencer's trustworthiness positively influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Accepted
H4	Content usefulness positively influences consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Accepted
H5	Age will moderate the relationship between influencer's attractiveness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H6	Age will moderate the relationship between influencer's expertise and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H7	Age will moderate the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H8	Age will moderate the relationship between content usefulness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media user in Malaysia	Rejected
H9	Gender will moderate the relationship between influencer's attractiveness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H10	Gender will moderate the relationship between influencer's expertise and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H11	Gender will moderate the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H12	Gender will moderate the relationship between content usefulness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media user in Malaysia	Rejected
H13	Income level will moderate the relationship between influencer's attractiveness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H14	Income level will moderate the relationship between influencer's expertise and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected

H15	Income level will moderate the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected
H16	Income level will moderate the relationship between content usefulness and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry among social media users in Malaysia	Rejected

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of influencer credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) and content usefulness on consumer purchase decisions among 395 social media users in Malaysia's fashion industry, employing a quantitative approach. The results showed that all aspects of influencer credibility and content usefulness significantly and positively influence consumer purchasing decisions. The consumers are more likely to purchase the fashion brand when the marketing influencers are perceived to be attractive, experts about the brand, and trustworthy. Meanwhile, the consumers are also influenced by the influencers who share the usefulness of the content, such as product reviews, price, and availability details.

However, demographic variables such as age, gender, and income did not significantly moderate these relationships, indicating that, in this situation, influencer marketing was effective regardless of demographic differences. This concluded that the marketing strategies can be much less segmented by demographic and more focused on brand loyalty. The brands can do broad influencer campaigns without needing to customize by age, gender, with better scalability and cost-benefits.

These findings offer vital implications for all fashion industry stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of targeting influencer credibility and useful content as they relate to consumer engagement and purchases. This study also calls for future research to incorporate other moderating factors that could reflect cultural influences and influencer categories and broaden the study location to improve generalization. The cultural influences, such as modesty and religious values, can affect how consumers evaluate each other for trust or physical attractiveness. While the influencer categories, celebrity vs. peer, might provide different levels of impact on consumer behaviour. The study can be moved beyond Malaysia, which would improve generalizability and also provide broad comparisons across cross-cultural studies.

Limitations of the Study

This study found several limitations that can be a basis for future research. The first limitation is the sample of the study, which only included social media users in Malaysia; hence, the generalization to other locations and cultural contexts is limited. Next, the second limitation is considering a few characteristics of influencers, which are attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and usefulness of content that might affect the influencers' success. Other characteristics should also be considered which are including product types or brand reputation.

Future research recommendations

Future studies should consider applying additional moderating variables, such as cultural variables, which can affect content fit, influencer choice, and brand positioning.

The other consideration should be considering including the role of social media channels because different channels may have their unique characteristics and relevant characteristics that may influence the way consumers behave. On top of that, different types of influencers play an important role to be considered, such as celebrity or public figure, micro-influencer or expert, as it involves different levels of trustworthiness and purchase decisions made by the customers. Lastly, the category of products promoted also should have interactive effect with the influencer characteristics that may affect how consumers response. For example, consumers may prefer to engage with celebrity endorsements for luxury goods, while engaging with micro-influencers of fast fashion goods. Addressing these factors in future literature will provide a better depth of actionable insights, which will be helpful creating innovative influencer marketing strategies in ongoing changing and diverse markets.

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