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THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON ISLAMIC FASHION CONSUMPTION: INVESTIGATING MILLENNIALS' PURCHASE INTENTION IN DIGITAL INFLUENCERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how millennials' fashion purchase behaviors are influenced by digital influencers, focusing on key factors such as perceived credibility, expertise, congruence, attractiveness, and para-social interaction. While influencer marketing is a major component of digital marketing, there remains a lack of tailored strategies targeting millennials, the primary demographic for social media engagement. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing an online survey distributed to 307 millennial social media users to analyze the extent to which digital influencers impact their purchasing decisions. Findings reveal that perceived credibility, congruence, attractiveness, and para-social interaction significantly influence millennials' purchase intentions, whereas perceived expertise does not exhibit a significant effect. However, the study is limited to a millennial sample, and the findings may not be generalizable to other demographic segments. Future research should explore how these influencer-related factors impact different consumer groups to develop a comprehensive understanding of digital marketing effectiveness. The study provides valuable insights for fashion brands seeking to optimize their digital engagement strategies, emphasizing the importance of credibility, authenticity, and interaction-driven influencer marketing to strengthen brand-consumer relationships. By deepening the understanding of influencer marketing strategies in the fashion industry, this research offers practical recommendations for brands aiming to enhance their influence on millennial purchasing behavior in the digital age.

Keywords: consumer behavior, digital influencers, fashion marketing, millennial consumers, purchase intentions, social media marketing

INTRODUCTION

In the past, companies leveraged celebrities' popularity and social standing to promote their products and services (Wang and Scheinbaum., 2017). However, with the rise of social media as a dominant digital platform, there has been a shift toward recognizing the influence of individuals known as digital influencers (Weismueller, 2020). Influencer marketing has evolved from traditional marketing strategies, such as print advertisements and celebrity endorsements, into a powerful digital tool. Today, companies view influencers not only as a means of enhancing brand image but also as a key strategy for digital marketing. Influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer shopping behavior by showcasing their lifestyles, brand interactions, and opinions. Through social media platforms, they engage with followers on topics such as fashion, makeup, fitness, and travel. Freberg et al. (2011) describe digital influencers as opinion leaders who frequently share their experiences, expertise, and recommendations, making them effective channels for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) marketing. By leveraging influencers, businesses can communicate brand messages more effectively and drive impulsive purchasing behavior. Despite the growing significance of influencer marketing, there remains a need for more strategic and data-driven approaches to maximize its effectiveness. This study aims to examine how digital influencers impact consumer purchase intentions through key factors such as perceived credibility, expertise, congruence, attractiveness, and parasocial interactions, providing insights into optimizing digital marketing strategies.

Over the past decade, the rise of social media and increased internet accessibility have fostered the emergence of digital influencers who have built substantial, engaged audiences through content creation. According to Chetioui et al. (2020), the rapid growth in social media influencer followings has significantly contributed to the expansion of influencer marketing across various industries. The fashion industry has increasingly leveraged this marketing strategy to enhance brand engagement and consumer trust. Several leading Canadian and American fashion brands—such as Peace Collective, Frank and Oak, Lululemon, H&M, Express, Nike, and Ralph Lauren—effectively utilize influencer marketing to strengthen brand awareness, loyalty, and sales. H&M, for instance, collaborates with influencers like Hannah Simone and Peyton List to cultivate a positive brand image and connect with their target audience more authentically (Brito, 2018).

The fashion industry is constantly evolving, requiring brands to stay updated on emerging trends to meet consumer expectations. Adaptability and innovation are essential for fashion brands to remain competitive in the market. This is particularly relevant for brands operating in culturally and religiously diverse markets, such as Islamic fashion. Octaviani & Puspita (2021) highlight that the growing demand for Muslim attire has positioned Islamic fashion as a rising global trend, embraced by a diverse consumer base ranging from teenagers to homemakers. This increasing demand presents an opportunity for brands to innovate by offering stylish yet culturally resonant fashion options. Influencer marketing has emerged as a key strategy in promoting Muslim fashion trends, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia. Purwaningwulan et al. (2018) emphasize that influencers in the Indonesian Muslim fashion industry utilize creativity, consumer engagement, and selective promotion to strengthen Islamic branding.

In Malaysia, influencers such as Vivy Yusof and Neelofa have significantly shaped young Muslim women's perceptions of quality and status in hijab fashion. The emergence of Muslim digital influencers, who skillfully integrate modern fashion trends with Shariah-compliant styles, underscores a broader shift towards the increasing demand for modest yet fashionable Islamic attire. The Quran (Al-A'raf 7:26) emphasizes that Islam does not prohibit fashion as long as it aligns with religious principles, reinforcing the notion that modesty and style can coexist within Shariah-compliant attire.

As competition in the fashion industry intensifies, consumers become increasingly trend-conscious and often turn to fashion influencers as credible sources for contemporary styles. In the digital era, the trustworthiness and quality of information provided by social media influencers play a significant role in shaping consumers' purchase. This influence is particularly evident among millennials, who are frequently referred to as "digital natives" due to their deep integration with social media platforms. Millennials, generally defined as individuals born between 1980 and 2000, exhibit the highest level of engagement with influencer marketing due to their heavy reliance on digital interactions and online content consumption. This demographic perceives digital influencers as relatable and trustworthy online figures, fostering parasocial relationships that enhance credibility and influence purchasing decisions (Freberg et al., 2011; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Despite the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, platforms like Zalora observed sustained fashion demand among young Malaysians during events such as Ramadan and year-end sales, reinforcing the notion that younger generations remain prime targets for digital marketing due to their high engagement with digital platforms. Henrie and Taylor (2009) further emphasize that Millennials' disposable income and collective spending power make them highly attractive to businesses. As a result, leveraging digital influencers who share their personalities and lifestyles provides companies with substantial advantages, as these influencers play a pivotal role in shaping Millennials' purchasing decisions.

Although influencer marketing continues to grow in relevance, many brands remain hesitant to fully invest in this strategy to effectively engage their target audiences. According to the Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report (2021), 11% of global respondents expressed strong enthusiasm for influencer marketing, with plans to allocate more than 40% of their marketing budget to influencer campaigns—an increase from 9% in 2020. While this upward trend reflects growing confidence, it also highlights ongoing concerns regarding influencer marketing's effectiveness, return on investment (ROI), and authenticity (Leung et al., 2022). As businesses continue to evaluate digital engagement strategies, it remains crucial to address brand-influencer alignment, credibility (Belanche et al., 2021), and audience trust (Reinikainen et al., 2020) to fully leverage influencer marketing potential.

In Malaysia, a similar trend is evident, with internet users heavily relying on platforms such as social media, online retail sites, search engines, and word-of-mouth to discover new brands. However, as of 2022, influencer marketing strategies—particularly electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)—accounted for only 31.6% of the overall marketing landscape, highlighting significant potential for growth and further optimization in reaching broader audiences. Despite its advantages, influencer marketing does not always guarantee success, as influencers may present mixed portrayals of brand experiences (Leung et al., 2022).. To ensure authenticity and effectiveness, brands must carefully align their values with those of the influencers they collaborate with. A misalignment in values can lead to ineffective marketing efforts, wasted resources, and, in some cases, reputational damage.

Trust plays a crucial role in online purchasing decisions, as it directly influences consumer confidence in brands and products (Ramanathan et al., 2020). Trust is closely linked to credibility, which refers to the perceived reliability and integrity of a source (Chetioui et al., 2020). In Islamic business ethics, credibility—or amanah—is a fundamental principle in fostering and maintaining consumer trust (Herijanto, 2022). Digital influencers are expected to provide honest and reliable recommendations to uphold their credibility. However, concerns about authenticity have emerged, as some influencers prioritize financial incentives over delivering unbiased feedback.

Given these challenges, this research aims to explore how millennials are influenced by digital influencers in their fashion purchasing decisions. Understanding these dynamics will help fashion businesses and marketers effectively utilize influencer marketing in the current digital landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section defines key concepts, including credibility, expertise, congruence, parasocial interaction, digital influencers, attractiveness, and purchase intention. It also examines relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, particularly the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Persuasion, which serve as the foundation for the study's hypotheses.

Digital Influencers as an opinion leader

Digital influencers are individuals with substantial online followings who have the ability to shape the opinions and behaviors of their audience. Often regarded as opinion leaders, these influencers provide feedback and recommendations on products or services based on personal experiences or expertise. According to Weeks et al. (2017), individuals with higher media exposure tend to wield greater influence within their social circles and serve as more effective communicators. One key factor contributing to their impact is the two-way communication they establish with their followers (Britt et al., 2020). Through comments, direct interactions, and soliciting feedback, influencers foster strong parasocial connections with their audiences. These interactions not only enhance engagement but also increase the influencer's ability to shape purchasing decisions by creating a sense of trust and relatability.

Beyond their communicative abilities, influencers are often regarded as trendsetters within their respective niches (The Star, 2023). Their followers perceive them as authoritative sources on emerging trends, making their opinions highly impactful. By consistently creating and sharing content, influencers maintain a strong presence in the minds of their audience, further reinforcing their influence on purchasing decisions.

Theory

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) expands on the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 1980) by emphasizing the role of individuals' beliefs in predicting behavior, including purchase intentions. According to the TPB, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape an individual's intention to perform a specific behavior, with intention serving as the primary determinant of action (Hegner et al., 2017). Additionally, Ajzen (2011) recognizes that emotions, shaped by underlying beliefs, can significantly influence both intentions and actions. However, despite its widespread acceptance, the TPB has been criticized for overlooking affective and cognitive factors that play a crucial role in shaping human behavior (Hegner et al., 2017). As such, integrating additional psychological and contextual variables alongside TPB constructs presents an opportunity for further exploration, particularly in the field of fashion marketing.

Theory of Persuasion

The Theory of Persuasion focuses on changing individuals' attitudes and behaviors through social influence (Masuda et al., 2022). Key concepts include subjective valuation and value maximization, which emphasize the impact of influencers on consumer self-interest. When consumers perceive influencers as credible and trustworthy, they are more likely to follow their recommendations, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase (Darde & Chaiken, 2005). In the context of social media influencers, the effectiveness of persuasion depends on factors such as the influencer's credibility, attractiveness, and the perceived alignment between the influencer's values and those of the consumer (Masuda et al., 2022). These factors help shape the consumer's intention to engage in a specific behavior, such as purchasing a product endorsed by the influencer.

Purchase Intention

The Theory of Persuasion explores how individuals' attitudes and behaviors are influenced through social influence mechanisms (Masuda et al., 2022). Central to this theory are the concepts of subjective valuation and value maximization, which highlight the role of influencers in shaping consumer self-interest. Consumers are more likely to follow an influencer's recommendations when they perceive the influencer as credible and trustworthy, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase (Darke & Chaiken, 2005).

In the context of social media influencers, the effectiveness of persuasion is determined by several factors, including credibility, attractiveness, and the perceived alignment of values between the influencer and the consumer (Masuda et al., 2022). These factors collectively shape a consumer's intention to engage in a specific behavior, such as purchasing a product endorsed by an influencer.

Perceived Credibility

Research consistently demonstrates that perceived credibility is one of the most critical factors influencing consumers' decisions to trust and follow influencers (Nam & Dan, 2018). While a celebrity's physical attractiveness may generate short-term appeal, long-term trust is primarily established through credibility (Langner & Eisend, 2011). In this context, credibility refers to the extent to which consumers perceive an influencer's claims and recommendations as truthful and reliable (Chetioui et al., 2020). Trust is a fundamental element of successful influencer marketing, particularly in today's digital landscape, where authenticity is increasingly valued (Jabr & Zheng, 2014). Influencers must be perceived as credible and trustworthy to effectively persuade their audiences, as these factors ultimately influence consumer purchasing decisions (Kim et al., 2018).

Hypotheses Development

The rapid rise of digital influencers in the fashion industry has led to significant shifts in consumer behavior, particularly among millennials. Various factors influence the effectiveness of influencers in shaping purchasing decisions. This study explores five key factors—perceived credibility, perceived expertise, perceived congruence, para-social interaction, and attractiveness—in predicting millennials' purchase intention toward fashion products. The following hypotheses are formulated based on prior research and theoretical models.

1. Perceived Credibility and Purchase Intention

Research consistently demonstrates that perceived credibility is one of the most critical factors influencing consumers' decisions to trust and follow influencers (Nam & Dan, 2018). While a celebrity's physical attractiveness may generate short-term appeal, long-term trust is primarily established through credibility (Langner & Eisend, 2011). In this context, credibility refers to the extent to which consumers perceive an influencer's claims and recommendations as truthful and reliable (Chetioui et al., 2020). Trust is a fundamental element of successful influencer marketing, particularly in today's digital landscape, where authenticity is increasingly valued (Jabr & Zheng, 2014). Influencers must be perceived as credible and trustworthy to effectively persuade their audiences, as these factors ultimately influence consumer purchasing decisions (Kim et al., 2018).

H1: The perceived credibility of digital influencers positively impacts millennials' purchase intention for fashion products.

2. Perceived Expertise and Purchase Intention

Chetioui et al. (2020) argue that perceived expertise is a crucial factor in shaping consumer opinions and influencing decisions on whether to follow influencer recommendations. Consumers tend to assess an influencer's expertise based on their perceived knowledge and experience, which in turn affects their perceptions of the quality and reliability of the promoted products or services. According to Yadav et al. (2013), individuals are more likely to trust content and recommendations from influencers they perceive as industry experts. For instance, a fashion influencer's endorsement of a fashion product is likely to be deemed more credible than a food influencer's recommendation on the same product. This trust stems from the belief that influencers with subject-matter expertise provide more informed and reliable insights, making them more persuasive and credible sources.

In other words, knowledge plays a fundamental role in establishing credibility. When an influencer demonstrates a deep understanding of a brand and its products, it enhances consumer confidence in their expertise, thereby strengthening trust in the endorsed brand. Similarly, Weismueller et al. (2020) suggest that purchase intent increases when social media influencers exhibit subject-matter knowledge, either through their content or professional background. This underscores the idea that both consumer attitudes toward an influencer and their purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by the influencer's perceived level of expertise.

H2: Perceived expertise of digital influencers positively impacts millennials' purchase intention for fashion products.

3. Perceived Congruence and Purchase Intention

Congruence refers to the extent to which an influencer's values and motivations align with those of their audience (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). In influencer marketing, congruence is essential for fostering a strong connection with followers. Influencers who reflect their audience's interests, beliefs, and values are more likely to create relatable and impactful content (Koay et al., 2023). Influencers who effectively engage their audience and exert greater influence are those who make deliberate efforts to establish similarities with their followers. This alignment enhances the audience's sense of connection, understanding, and empowerment through the shared content. Chetioui et al. (2020) and Koay et al. (2023) argue that higher levels of congruence lead to more positive follower attitudes and increased purchase intent. Similarly, Xu and Pratt (2018) emphasize that when followers perceive aspects of themselves in an influencer, they are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on their recommendations.

H3: Perceived congruence of digital influencers positively impacts millennials' purchase intention for fashion products.

4. Para-social Interaction and Purchase Intention

Parasocial interaction (PSI) refers to the one-sided psychological relationships that followers develop with influencers through consistent exposure to their content (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). By sharing personal narratives and aspects of their daily lives, influencers foster a sense of intimacy and relatability, leading followers to perceive them as trusted friends rather than distant public figures. This perceived relationship strengthens brand loyalty and trust, ultimately influencing consumer purchasing behavior (Koay et al., 2023).

PSI significantly impacts consumer decision-making, as followers develop an illusion of familiarity and emotional connection with influencers despite the unidirectional nature of the interaction. This sense of closeness enhances perceived authenticity, increasing the likelihood that consumers will trust and act

upon influencer recommendations, thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

H4: Para-social interaction between digital influencers and millennials positively impacts purchase intention for fashion products.

5. Attractiveness and Purchase Intention

Attractiveness is another key factor that significantly influences purchase intention. Erdogan (1999) defines attractiveness in terms of physical beauty and other appealing traits such as personality and athletic ability. In influencer marketing, influencers perceived as attractive are more successful in capturing attention and influencing consumer decisions (Koay et al., 2023). Attractive influencers enhance brand recognition and trust, thereby increasing purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Moreover, consumers are more likely to respond positively to and engage with messages delivered by visually appealing influencers. Wang and Scheinbaum (2017) argue that physical attractiveness plays a critical role in facilitating the effective communication of meaningful messages. An influencer's attractive appearance serves as a visual hook, drawing in audiences and encouraging further engagement with the brands they endorse. First impressions are particularly influential in digital marketing, as an initial visual appeal can create a lasting positive impression and increase content engagement. Additionally, Jang et al., (2021) suggest that attractiveness contributes to an influencer's credibility, reinforcing their influence on consumer perceptions. An influencer's ability to cultivate a large and loyal following is often enhanced by their physical appeal, which in turn increases the visibility and recognition of the brands they promote. As a result, attractive influencers play a crucial role in strengthening brand identity and expanding consumer reach.

H5: The attractiveness of digital influencers positively impacts millennials' purchase intention for fashion products.

These hypotheses serve as the conceptual framework for the empirical investigation into the influence of digital influencers on millennials' purchasing behavior. The next sections will explore the methodology used to test these hypotheses.

Research Framework

The following figure is the research framework in Figure 1:

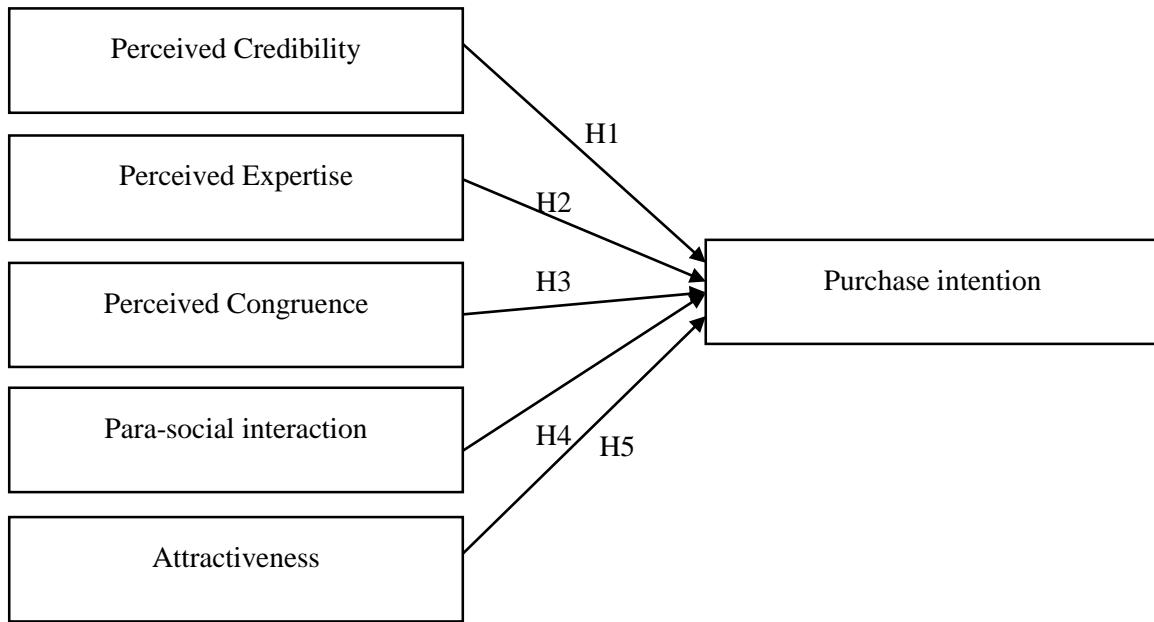


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology used to complete the study. Components of this section include research process, research design, theoretical frameworks, sampling and questionnaire design, data collection method, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research strategy to collect and analyze data, utilizing a survey research approach to test the study's hypotheses. According to Malhotra (2019), quantitative research is designed to "describe and explain phenomena through numerical representation." The survey method was chosen to investigate the purchasing intentions of millennials in Malaysia, focusing on how they are influenced by digital influencers. The structured questionnaire was distributed to social media users from the millennial generation, making it an appropriate and effective data collection method for this study.

Sampling Frame

The study employed a purposive sampling method, targeting millennial social media users who engage with digital influencers. The selection criteria ensured that participants had prior exposure to fashion-related influencer content. The sample size of 307 respondents was determined based on practical constraints and time limitations. According to Hair et al. (2010), a sample size of 100-200 is often sufficient for multiple regression analysis in behavioral research, indicating that the collected sample size still meets general statistical adequacy for quantitative analysis. The targeted population consisted of millennials aged 23-43, as they represent the primary demographic actively engaging with influencer-driven fashion content on digital platforms.

Questionnaire Design

The study employed a structured questionnaire, consisting of a fixed and standardized set of questions designed within a predetermined framework to collect data from respondents. A structured questionnaire ensures consistency in data collection and facilitates comparative analysis across respondents. The survey primarily focuses on digital fashion influencers, targeting millennials aged 23 to 43 years old. A filter question was used to ensure that only respondents within the specified age group participated in the study.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Section A: Covers demographic information, utilizing multiple-choice questions to accommodate various respondent characteristics, Section B: Focuses on dependent and independent variables, using closed-ended questions to ensure clarity and precision in responses.

This study employed a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 7 = "Strongly Agree", to assess respondents' perceptions of digital influencers and their impact on purchase intention. The structured questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms, enabling respondents to conveniently complete the survey using their mobile or electronic devices. The survey instrument was designed to evaluate five key independent variables—perceived credibility, perceived expertise, perceived congruence, para-social interaction, and attractiveness—and their influence on the dependent variable, purchase intention.

To ensure validity, reliability, and relevance in digital marketing research, the questionnaire items were adapted from established studies with rigorously validated scales widely used in influencer marketing and consumer behavior research:

- Perceived credibility, expertise, and congruence were adapted from Chetioui et al. (2020).
- Attractiveness measurement items were sourced from Lou & Yuan (2019).
- Parasocial interaction items were drawn from Sokolova & Kefi (2020).

The inclusion of these well-established measurement scales ensures methodological consistency and theoretical alignment, thereby enhancing the study's academic robustness and reproducibility in the field of digital influencer marketing.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were analyzed using SPSS software, employing various statistical techniques to derive meaningful insights. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize key characteristics of the dataset, offering a comprehensive overview of respondent demographics and response patterns. To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, a reliability analysis using

Cronbach's alpha was conducted, confirming that the measurement scales were statistically reliable. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was performed to test the study's hypotheses and examine the relationships between the independent variables—perceived credibility, perceived expertise, perceived congruence, parasocial interaction, and attractiveness—and the dependent variable, purchase intention. These analytical techniques provided robust statistical validation of the study's findings, ensuring that the results were accurate, reliable, and meaningful in the context of digital influencer marketing. The methodological rigor employed in this analysis enhances the study's credibility and its contribution to understanding consumer behavior in digital marketing research.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 307 responses were collected through online surveys, but only 260 responses were valid and used for analysis, representing an 84.69% response rate—exceeding the 60% threshold recommended for conclusive findings, as suggested by Fincham (2008). Table 1 shows a detailed demographic analysis reveals that the majority of respondents (68.5%) were female, while 31.5% were male. The age distribution indicates that 83.5% of participants were within the 23–29 age range, followed by 14.2% in the 30–39 age group and 2.3% in the 40–43 age group. Educational background analysis shows that 66.9% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, 22.3% obtained a diploma, and 5.8% completed high school. Additionally, the study considered participants' digital engagement behaviour, particularly their frequency of interaction with influencer content, which may influence their purchasing decisions. These demographic insights provide a well-rounded sample profile, offering a robust contextual foundation for interpreting the study's findings and validating its implications within digital influencer marketing.

Table 1
Demographic analysis of the study

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	68.5
	Male	31.5
Age Group	23-29	83.5
	30-39	14.2
	40-43	2.3
Ethnicity	Malay	91.2
	Chinese	3.8
	Indian	3.1
	Other	1.9
Education	High School	5.8
	Diploma	22.3
	Bachelor's Degree	66.9
	Master	4.2
	PhD	0.8
Marital Status	Single	82.3
	Married	17.7

Employment Status	Employed	30.8
	Unemployed	3.5
	Self-employed	4.6
	Student	61.2
Monthly Income	Below RM4,850	91.2
	RM4,851 - RM10,970	7.7
	Above RM10,971	1.2
Time Spent on Social Media	Less than 1 hour	2.3
	1 – 3 hours	28.5
	4 – 6 hours	45
	More than 6 hours	24.2
Most Used Social Media	TikTok	63.8
	Instagram	14.6
	Twitter	7.3
	Facebook	10
	Other	4.2
Favourite Fashion Influencer	Vivy Yusof	18.5
	Neelofa	42.3
	Rizman Ruzaini	16.5
	Nazreem Musa	5.4
	Other	17.2

Hypothesis Testing

This research examines the relationship between Perceived Credibility (PC), Perceived Expertise (PE), Perceived Congruence (PCO), Para-Social Interaction (PSI), and Attractiveness (A) in influencing millennials' purchase intentions through digital influencers. Based on the theoretical framework and literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested to assess the influence of these factors on consumer behaviour in the fashion industry. Data for this study were collected via an online survey questionnaire, which was distributed through the researcher's social media networks, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and email.

The multiple regression analysis results are presented in Table 2, confirming the strength and validity of relationships between independent variables and purchase intention. Specifically, perceived credibility ($p = 0.003$), perceived congruence ($p = 0.000$), parasocial interaction ($p = 0.001$), and attractiveness ($p = 0.002$) significantly influenced purchase intention, while perceived expertise ($p = 0.078$) did not exhibit a significant effect.

Table 2

Multiple regression analysis

Variables	Standardized Coefficients β	t-value	p-value	Results
Perceived Credibility	.110	2.010	.045*	Supported
Perceived Expertise	-.100	-1.953	.052	Not supported
Perceived Congruence	.288	4.563	<.001*	Supported
Para-social Interaction	.520	9.032	<.001*	Supported
Attractiveness	.124	2.588	.010*	Supported

The discussion of findings has been strengthened by individually examining each hypothesis and linking results to supporting literature. For instance, the significant impact of perceived congruence aligns with prior research by Chetioui et al., (2020), emphasizing that alignment between influencer identity and consumer preferences enhances trust and purchase intention. Similarly, parasocial interaction's strong influence corroborates findings by Sokolova & Kefi (2020), highlighting the role of psychological closeness in fostering engagement. The lack of significance for perceived expertise aligns with previous studies suggesting that millennials prioritize relatability over professional qualifications (Weismueller et al., 2020).

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the field of influencer marketing and consumer behavior. This research examines five key factors that influence fashion purchase behavior, particularly when products are endorsed by digital influencers. These factors include perceived credibility, perceived congruence, attractiveness, expertise, and para-social interaction. By integrating these variables, this study develops a new research model that explains millennials' purchase intentions in the context of digital influencer marketing, marking its primary contribution.

While previous studies have examined the role of digital influencers, they primarily focused on general consumer segments rather than targeting specific demographics. Such as Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019), Stephen (2016), Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019), Erdogan (1999), Lou and Yuan (2019), Saima and Khan (2020), Sama (2019), Labrecque et al. (2013), and Cheung et al. (2012)—have examined the role of digital influencers, they primarily focused on general consumer segments rather than targeting specific demographics. However, several researchers, including Lim et.al., (2017) have explored social media influencers within different contexts, highlighting similarities with the digital influencer phenomenon in the millennial era. Additionally, this study is grounded in a theoretical framework that incorporates the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2011), the Persuasion Theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961), and an expanded theoretical model. The objective is to explain the behavioral factors that drive millennials to align their purchasing decisions with the endorsements and recommendations of digital influencers.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

This study has several limitations, primarily concerning the respondents and sample size. The study exclusively targeted millennial participants, making the initial sample selection highly specific. Additionally, the relatively small sample size limits the ability to conduct more robust statistical analyses to uncover significant relationships within the dataset. Quantitative research typically requires

larger sample sizes to ensure statistical reliability. While the expected sample size for this study was 384 respondents, the researcher received 307 responses, of which only 260 were deemed reliable and usable. A larger sample size could have yielded more dependable outcomes and increased the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the scope and depth of the argument may be somewhat constrained due to the researcher's limited experience in conducting independent research and producing extensive academic publications.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable recommendations for future research in the field of digital influencer marketing. To enhance the accuracy and generalizability of findings, future studies should increase the sample size and expand the target demographic to include baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. This broader approach would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how different generations respond to digital influencers in fashion marketing. Additionally, future research should explore the impact of emerging technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR), on digital influencers' effectiveness in shaping consumer behavior. Investigating immersive experiences and virtual try-on features could provide valuable insights into how technological advancements enhance consumer engagement and influence purchase decisions in the fashion industry.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that four out of five examined factors significantly impact consumer satisfaction and purchase intentions, namely perceived credibility, perceived congruence, attractiveness, and para-social interaction. The research underscores the critical role of digital influencers in shaping fashion-related consumer decisions, positioning them as key sources of information and trend guidance in the digital era. However, the study also raises important questions regarding ethical considerations and the long-term effectiveness of influencer marketing, emphasizing the need for further exploration of these challenges.

Additionally, the fashion industry is constantly evolving, requiring brands to adapt to the dynamic relationship between digital influencers and millennial consumers. Understanding and responding to these shifting market dynamics is essential for maintaining industry relevance and competitive advantage. Since this study employed a qualitative approach to examine interactions between variables, future research should consider longitudinal qualitative investigations to uncover the complex stages and evolving nature of influencer-consumer relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A key recommendation for future research is to explore the proposed model by analyzing how demographic factors influence the effectiveness of digital influencers in shaping purchase intentions within the fashion industry. This study provides valuable insights into the diverse motivations behind digital influencer engagement, considering age, gender, and income levels as potential determinants of consumer behavior. Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of authenticity in digital influencer marketing. Businesses should prioritize authenticity and transparency among influencers to enhance credibility and build consumer trust. Millennials, in particular, value sincerity and are more inclined to trust recommendations that appear genuine and reflective of the influencer's style. Additionally, businesses should consider strategic partnerships with emerging brands. Collaborating with independent and up-and-coming fashion brands allows influencers to curate unique content,

catering to millennials' preference for unconventional and innovative styles. Partnering with lesser-known brands can also help businesses differentiate themselves in a competitive fashion market.

To establish credibility as experts in the fashion industry, digital influencers must possess extensive industry knowledge and consistently produce high-quality, authentic content. Staying informed on the latest trends, collaborating with industry experts, and attending major fashion events are essential strategies for maintaining relevance. Additionally, fostering open and honest communication—such as engaging with audience questions and sharing personal opinions—can help influencers strengthen relationships with their followers. The findings also highlight the significance of two-way communication in fostering strong para-social interactions. Influencers should actively engage with their audience, encouraging community-building through interactive discussions, polls, and direct engagement in fashion-related conversations. This sense of involvement enhances audience loyalty and trust, ultimately influencing purchase decisions.

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