



The Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing in Building a Strong Brand Image in Malaysia's Fashion Industry

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Article Info:

DOI: 10.22399/ijcesen.3738

Received : 03 November 2024

Accepted : 28 December 2024

Keywords

Social Media Marketing
Influencer Credibility
Brand Awareness
Fashion Businesses
Malaysia

Abstract:

Social media marketing including influencer marketing is one of the most successful methods for promoting products and services in today's dynamic digital environment. This is attributable to the feasibility of promoting goods and services via social media marketing. There has been a recent increase in the incorporation of prominent individuals' thoughts and platforms into advertising efforts. This represents a recent invention in the marketing sector. This study aims to investigate the impact of influencer marketing on brand recognition and sales of Malaysian fashion firms. This research indicates that fashion enterprises can significantly gain from influencer marketing to effectively engage their target audience, enhance brand visibility, and boost sales. This potential may indeed exist, as indicated by the findings of this investigation on the relevance of influencer marketing activities in Malaysian fashion industry. The concept of influencers serving as a medium for organisations to connect with engaged and pertinent audiences is increasingly gaining traction in a dynamic digital environment. To assess client purchasing behaviour, it is essential to evaluate the authenticity of influencers and online advertising, as well as to articulate the significance of these elements. The research conducted a comprehensive analysis to ascertain whether brand awareness mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and brand awareness. This study aimed to assist the Malaysian fashion sector in developing efficient influencer marketing initiatives. The research findings emphasise the significance of influencer reputation and the necessity for honest advertising in influencer marketing. Brand awareness in Malaysia's fashion sector is predominantly reliant on the reputation of influencers to improve the brand image of a business.

1. Introduction

Social media has evolved into an essential and highly effective instrument for promoting products and services in the contemporary digital landscape, fundamentally transforming the formerly static marketing environment. The use of influencers into

extensive marketing strategies is a significant and swiftly expanding trend in contemporary marketing[9]. An "influencer" is an individual possessing a substantial and prominent following on many social media platforms, endowed with the unique ability to influence consumer purchase behaviour. Their deliberate involvement in

marketing initiatives, alongside shaping customer preferences, contributes to establishing a robust and enduring brand reputation. Influencer marketing is rapidly ascending in popularity, utilised by both small enterprises and large corporations. Enterprises constitute the foundation of every economy, playing a vital role in employment creation and stimulating economic progress[6]. Consequently, to maintain resilience and success in a perpetually evolving and highly competitive market, it is essential for firms to not only adopt but also actively implement efficient marketing strategies.

2. Background of the Study

Influencer marketing can enhance the visibility of prominent brands. Brands may extend their reach to a larger audience via influencers due to their extensive and engaged social media followings. Moreover, studies indicate that influencer marketing can significantly affect consumers' purchasing decisions[10]. The probability of a product or service being acquired improves when endorsed by a reputable influencer. The influence of individuals is significantly influenced by their magnitude and calibre. Although macro-influencers possess the capacity to reach a broader audience that micro-influencers exert a more significant influence owing to their smaller, more focused audiences[2]. The return on investment of influencer marketing campaigns is a number that certain research may seek to evaluate. To ensure the effective allocation of their influencer marketing spending, prominent corporations prioritise this aspect[7]. Outcomes may also fluctuate based on the advertised product or service. Influencer marketing may be more effective for certain products based on their attributes and target audience. This study will elucidate how fashion businesses in Malaysia can attain a competitive edge through the strategic use of influencer marketing to expand their client base, enhance product awareness, and increase revenue in modern digital environment.

While influencer marketing is gaining popularity, it remains a relatively novel strategy within the broad spectrum of marketing techniques. There is a deficiency of research that examines the overarching implications for fashion companies, especially regarding potential enhancements in revenue and brand recognition. This study's significance is considerable, as it will illuminate the transformative potential of influencer marketing for fashion businesses in Malaysia. This research seeks to elucidate the potential advantages and disadvantages of marketing strategies for fashion businesses in Malaysia, thereby assisting them in attaining their

marketing goals and maintaining a competitive edge in a dynamic business environment [1].

3. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to assess the efficacy of influencer marketing employed by fashion firms in Malaysia in enhancing their brand reputation. This essay examines the Malaysian fashion industry, particularly the role of influencers in shaping public perception of different brands. Additionally, this article must ascertain how the attributes of trustworthiness and relatability, inherent to influencers, influence the feelings of Malaysian customers. The Malaysian fashion industry has commenced an examination of the relationship between influencer marketing and customer purchasing tendencies. The primary objective of the study is to conduct a critical analysis of strategies for augmenting the visibility of Malaysian brands in the fashion sector via the strategic implementation of influencer marketing.

4. Literature Review

Influencers has become one of the most prominent members associated with promotion of products and improvement of brand awareness, especially in fashion industry on a global scale. Recommendations from prominent individuals—renowned specialists in a specific field with substantial online followings—act as social proof for prospective buyers[12]. Consequently, prominent individuals with substantial followings can enhance a business or brand's visibility by consistently disseminating valuable content on social media, so attracting a significant number of prospective buyers[8]. The influencer marketing business has experienced a stratospheric climb since its peak a decade ago. This has compelled companies in Malaysia's fashion sector to pursue influencer collaborations or integrate influencer marketing tactics to enhance brand awareness.

Social media influencers are rapidly seen as one of the most effective promotional marketing strategies compared to traditional ways[5]. Influencer marketing is thriving because to the pandemic's swift expansion, alterations in consumer expenditure patterns, significant technological advancements, and the internet's strategic marketing approaches. Influencers on these platforms captivate their followers with their artistic creations, including striking photographs, videos, expertise, abilities, and industry experience[14]. Successful execution requires content producers to maintain a relatable and likeable presence that further influences improvement of overall awareness of a brand.

Exhibiting trustworthiness, credibility, and relatability facilitates the establishment of enduring partnerships. The significance lies in the fact that these individuals are ordinary people who have attained mastery in a specific domain, rather than being renowned figures. As organisations increasingly engage in influencer marketing, they are becoming more aware of its benefits, resulting in a gradual decrease in the share of traditional marketing channels such as radio, print, and television advertisements. Ninety percent of marketers consider influencer marketing to be effective[3].

Moreover, considering that consumer behaviour is perpetually shifting and increasingly centred on social media, there exists an imperative to comprehensively grasp the significant significance of influencer marketing. Upon attainment, this comprehension can furnish organisations with a wealth of invaluable knowledge, enabling them to design marketing plans that are both pertinent and exceptionally effective in engaging their target audience. This study is conducted with an optimistic and progressive outlook, aiming to make a substantial and beneficial contribution to the overarching objectives of fashion firms in Malaysia. This research seeks to assist fashion enterprises in Malaysia in comprehending influencer marketing and its mechanisms. It aims to enhance their growth potential and ensure their viability among the ever-evolving marketing problems of the digital age[1]. The study aims to guide fashion organisations in Malaysia by providing them with the requisite skills to thrive in the intricate and dynamic digital landscape, while utilising influencer marketing to enhance brand awareness.

5. Research Question

- What is the impact of influencer credibility on the development of strong brand image?

6. Methodology

6.1. Research design:

To collect their data, researchers employed a cross-sectional approach and monitored participants for four months. For the cross-sectional design to be effective, it was essential to collect data at a singular, cost-effective moment. Due to limited time and energy, the researcher used a quantitative approach. Employing a random sample method, we successfully contacted each respondent in the survey. Subsequently, to conduct a valid study, the suitable sample size was determined via Rao Soft. Participants would receive information regarding the

project and be afforded the opportunity to pose enquiries to the researcher while awaiting the completion of the surveys.

6.2. Sampling:

The data set for the investigation comprised two surveys: one including 70 participants for the pilot and another with 631 persons for the primary analysis. A total of questionnaires was distributed to the clientele utilising a random sampling procedure. Due to the sensitive nature of the obtained data, the researcher would not have accepted incomplete surveys for this study. The study sample was projected to comprise 600 persons utilising the Rao-soft approach; hence, 750 questionnaires were distributed. Following the exclusion of 75 incomplete responses from the original 706, a total of 631 participants were polled for the final study.

6.3. Data and Measurement:

In this study, questionnaires served as the principal instrument for data collection. In Part A, we solicited respondents' fundamental demographic data; in Part B, we employed a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate their experiences with various online and offline venues. A comprehensive array of secondary sources, including online databases, was meticulously examined to get the requisite information.

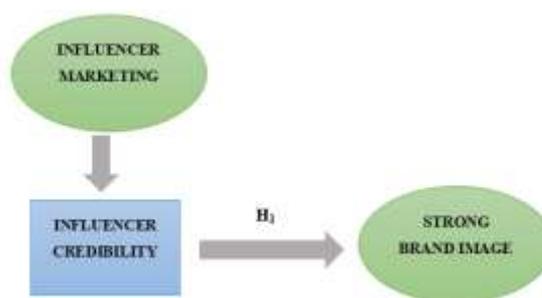
6.4. Statistical Software:

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 and MS Excel.

6.5. Statistical Tools:

The fundamental characteristics of the data were elucidated by descriptive analysis. To establish validity, the researcher has done factor analysis in conjunction with ANOVA.

7. Conceptual Framework



8. Results

Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis (FA) is frequently employed to investigate the fundamental component structure of a collection of measurement items. Invisible influences are thought to directly influence the values of the examined variables. Accuracy analysis (FA) is a methodology that use models. The fundamental objective of this study is to identify correlations between explicit events, their underlying causes, and the assessment of errors.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Method is a tool for assessing the appropriateness of data for factor analysis. To guarantee adequate sampling, we evaluate both the comprehensive model and each specific model variable. Statistical approaches can be employed to ascertain the extent of common variance among many variables. Factor analysis is more effective for datasets with lower percentages. The outcome of executing KMO is a numerical value ranging from 0 to 1. A KMO value ranging from 0.8 to 1 indicates that the sample size is deemed adequate.

Remedial action is required if the KMO is below 0.6, as this signifies inadequate sampling. Select judiciously; certain authors opt for 0.5 for this rationale, resulting in a range of 0.5–0.6.

A KMO value close to 0 signifies elevated partial correlations in comparison to overall correlations. Once more, substantial correlations present a considerable obstacle to component analysis. Refer to the following for Kaiser's eligibility criteria:

A decline from 0.050 to 0.059.

- Significantly below average (0.60-0.69)

The standard range for middle school is 0.70 to 0.79 centimetres.

Employing a scale ranging from 0.80 to 0.89 for quality points.

The fluctuation from 0.90 to 1.00 is quite impressive.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .912 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 3252.968 |
| | df | 190 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity provides more proof of the generalisability of the correlation matrices. The researcher posit a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy of 0.912. Researchers employed Bartlett's sphericity test and obtained a p-value of 0.00.

Researchers concluded that the correlation matrix fails to qualify as a correlation matrix based on the substantial results of Bartlett's sphericity test.

Independent Variable

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a type of digital marketing that involves collaborations between companies and prominent individuals in specific industries or on social media platforms. Individuals commonly referred to as "influencers" has a substantial and dedicated following on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, among others. The practice of leveraging fame and influence to endorse products, services, or entire businesses is termed "influencer marketing" [1].

Factor

Influencer Credibility

The reputation of the influencer determines much how effective influencer marketing is in the fashion business. Three basic qualities define credibility of an influencer: experience, sincerity, and trustworthiness. Fashion influencers who show trend awareness, brand devotion, and sincerity in their contacts with fans are more welcome by the public of Malaysia. Apart from improving the relationship between the sponsored company and their audience, a trustworthy influencer gives the brand credibility. Studies show that after trust is developed, followers are more likely to positively identify the endorsed brand of the influencer. Therefore, the influencer's suggestions have great influence; the brand's reputation has been much enhanced; this is especially important in the visually-oriented fashion industry, known for its intense competition.

Dependent Variable

Strong Brand Image

Brand awareness quantifies the extent to which customers recognise and comprehend a brand or product that helps in improvement of brand image in an industry. A high recall score signifies that individuals can identify and recognise a brand upon hearing or seeing it. The consumer's path to purchasing decisions commences with the establishment of brand awareness. To establish a renowned brand, two essential elements are required: 1. Assistive Awareness: This refers to the degree of consumer awareness of a brand when presented with cues or directives. For example, an individual acquainted with a list of automotive

brands may be capable of selecting one. The second indicator is "Unaided Awareness," which evaluates buyers' capacity to recall a brand without prompts. An individual possesses a high level of brand awareness when they can identify a specific brand in the context of a product or service category[1].

Relationship of between influencer credibility and strong brand image

In actuality, influencer endorsements enhance brand awareness, which, when combined with the credibility attributes of influencers, can establish a robust connection with a follower regarding their purchasing behaviour. The manner in which an influencer represents themselves in connection with their sponsoring firm significantly influences consumer perceptions of the product and the influencer's reputation. Influencers have become an essential element of the marketing mix due to their ability to stimulate customer attention and ultimately drive purchase intent. A fundamental principle of loyalty is brand awareness, and the behaviours of followers in cultivating this awareness are significantly affected by the credibility of the source[11].

Building on the previous discussion, the researcher tested the following hypothesis including critical assessment of the relationships between influencer credibility and strong brand image in development of an efficient influencer marketing campaign for fashion businesses in Malaysia.

"H₀: There is no significant impact of influencer credibility on strong brand image development"

"H₁: There is a significant impact of influencer credibility on strong brand image development"

Table 2: H₁ ANOVA Test

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-----------|------|
| Sum | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 39588.620 | 297 | 5385.511 | 1,032.696 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 492.770 | 333 | 5.215 | | |
| Total | 40081.390 | 630 | | | |

A substantial revelation has emerged from this investigation. The p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 alpha level, signifies that the F value of 1,032.696 is statistically significant. Consequently, the researcher can conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected and that ***"H₁: There is a significant impact of influencer credibility on strong brand image development"*** is accepted.

9. Discussion

To ascertain whether distinct consumer reactions are evident, it is essential to analyse the roles of different types of influencers. It is well acknowledged that the use of celebrities in advertisements enhances their efficacy. As social media gained prominence, companies increasingly depended on ordinary individuals—termed micro-influencers—to endorse their products and engage target demographics. Unlike the extensive data supporting the advertising efficacy of celebrities, there is a scarcity of literature about the promotion of enterprises by micro-celebrities. Outcomes of influencer marketing campaigns within the Malaysian fashion sector, as conveyed by consumers and thought leaders, aimed at shaping future purchasing decisions. The study revealed that influencer evaluations positively influenced purchase intention, whereas consumer ratings had no impact. When a celebrity supported a product, people exhibited a heightened propensity to purchase it. Regarding purchase intent, endorsements from powerful individuals exert a more significant influence than those from celebrities. Both companies and their followers are attracted to this kind of micro-influencers due of the credibility they project. Entities within Malaysia's fashion industry finance them due to the robust connections established with their audience, hence enhancing the visibility of the sponsors' brands.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, individuals exhibited greater trust in influencers who transparently disclosed their advertising affiliations than in those who concealed them. The increasing complexity of social media in corporate strategy has led to a marked rise in interest about advertising transparency in influencer marketing, as indicated by the literature review. Consumers assess influencers' credibility based on their advertising, making it essential for influencers to disclose whether their promotions are funded. The essay asserts that all influencers, regardless of their scale, must be authentic in their endorsements and clearly disclose sponsorships to enhance the credibility of their sources. Considering that the credibility of influencers directly affects brand awareness, it is prudent to persist in employing them as endorsers for marketing campaigns

Author Statements:

- **Ethical approval:** The conducted research is not related to either human or animal use.
- **Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests

or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

- **Acknowledgement:** The authors declare that they have nobody or no-company to acknowledge.
- **Author contributions:** The authors declare that they have equal right on this paper.
- **Funding information:** The authors declare that there is no funding to be acknowledged.
- **Data availability statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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