The Effect of Social Media Influencer Marketing Disclosure on Consumer's Perceived Brand Image and Purchase Intention among Youth in Malaysia

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Abstract

Social media influencer (SMI) marketing has become widely used by both big and small brands in order to promote their products and services as well as improve their brand image among consumers. Issues arise when SMIs are sharing paid marketing materials as a part of a brand's online marketing campaign, without having a clear indication between an honest opinion and paid content. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the credibility of social media influencers among youth and their effects on the youth's perceived brand image and purchase intentions. In achieving this, a quantitative method is used in this present study by distributing the questionnaire to 111 youth in Malaysia who are active social media users and follow at least one SMI. Convenience sampling was used in the present study to obtain respondents' numbers. The inclusion criteria were based on the usage of the top four social media platforms in Malaysia. Findings show there is a moderate to weak positive impact of social media influencers' paid posts on youth's perceived brand image and purchase intention. Results also indicated that positive perception of brand image and purchase intention by youth is a result of the positive representation or credibility of SMIs, mediated by brand image and source credibility.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer; Key Opinion Leader; electronic word-of-mouth; brand image, purchase intention

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms are utilized by billions of people worldwide and have quickly emerged as one of the fundamental technologies of our day. According to the Digital 2022 April Global Statshot study, there are 4.65 billion social media users worldwide, accounting for 58.7% of the total global population Kemp, S. (2022, April 21). It was reported in DIGITAL 2022 that Malaysia's social media users consist of 91.7% of the total population (Data Reportal, 2022). It's hardly unexpected that businesses have embraced social media as a marketing medium, given the large potential audience that spends many hours per day on multiple platforms using social media. SMI marketing has great potential in reaching out marketing materials directly to potential buyers based on SMI profiles.

As of February 2022, it was reported that 30.4% of internet users are aged 16 to 64, following influencers and experts, plus the youth aged 18 - 34 is the age group that uses social media platforms by Meta the most (Data Reportal, 2022). SMI marketing has grown popular among both big and small businesses to promote their products and services while also strengthening their brand image among consumers. In the Malaysian landscape, however, there is no requirement for influencers to disclose whether a post is a sponsored or paid post. According to previous research, advertisement disclosure in SMI marketing indirectly impacts consumer purchase intention (Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, &

Soutar, 2020). Social media influencer (SMI) marketing influences consumer's perceived brand image and purchase intention when SMIs publish posts on social media about the brands and their products and services.

Presently, there are no particular restrictions in Malaysia that regulate influencer marketing on social media (Nawi & Faizol, 2018). In general, the Consumer Protection Act of 1999 (CPA) governs consumer issues and their protection in the country. Compared to other countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, as well as South Korea, Malaysia does not have any regulations that require influencers to clarify sponsored posts to their audience (Bogliari, 2020; Ji-Hye, 2020; Library of Congress, 2022). In the event that SMIs share sponsored marketing materials as part of a brand's online marketing effort, problems occur because there is no apparent distinction between a genuine opinion and paid social media content. Social media users or followers have the right to know about the status of the information or media that they consume by providing a clear indication of a paid post (Nawi & Faizol, 2018). As a result, the purpose of this research is to determine the credibility of social media influencers among youth, as well as their effects on the youth's perception of brand image and purchase intentions.

The first objective of the study is to discover the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on the source credibility of social media influencers among youth. The second objective is to explore the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on youth's perceived brand image, and the third objective is to discover the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on youth's purchasing intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media influencer (SMI) marketing is in demand nowadays by brands in order to promote their products or services. SMI marketing is a form of advertisement that is done by paying SMI for posting content that promotes the brand's products or services be it in the format of text, photo, or video (Radwan, Mousa, Mohamed, & Youssef, 2021). There are several categories of influencers grouped according to their niche which includes fashion, beauty, travel, lifestyle, gaming, food, pets, parenting, and many more (Santora, 2021). The use of influencers to drive a brand's message to reach the target group is emphasized in influencer marketing (Smart Insights, 2017). Influencer marketing on social media provides a new platform for businesses to engage with consumers in a more personal, organic, and large-scale manner (Glucksman, 2022). In contrast with traditional advertisements, SMIs who are Key Opinion Leaders (KOL), disseminate information through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) directly to their audience and are able to influence their followers. People are more likely to believe information from people that they consider trustworthy.

Posts by SMIs that are paid by brands or businesses to promote products or services are called paid posts or paid advertisements. This marketing method is considered a new form of advertisement. However, there is only a self-regulation guideline provided under the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code but there are no strict laws that regulate SMI content and require the disclosure of paid posts or advertisements by SMIs (The Star Online, 2022). The followers of SMIs may or may not be able to differentiate between a paid post or an honest opinion by the SMI unless the SMI clearly discloses any advertisement posted on their social media page. The information that informs customers that a promotional message is advertising is known as advertising disclosure (Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar, 2020). The disclosures should be conspicuous, well-placed, and understandable (Weismueller et al., 2020). Some of the methods of disclosing paid posts or advertisements by SMIs is by including phrases such as 'Ad', 'advertisement', 'Sponsored by (brand)', 'In partnership with (brand)' or adding hashtags such as #ad #sponsored #brandname that indicates the brand or product endorsement (Weismueller et al., 2020). Disclosure of paid posts or advertisements has an impact on how followers perceive the SMI in terms of honesty and trustworthiness. Unlike other countries like the US, UK, and South Korea, in Malaysia, people who receive the advertisement are not given the right to be informed of what type of content they are receiving, and the SMI's paid content is not regulated according to the right advertising guidelines.

Previous research has found that the credibility of an SMI is determined by three factors which are trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise (Lou & Kim, 2019; Weismueller et al., 2020). The message receivers' perception of the source's honesty, sincerity, or truthfulness is measured by the source's trustworthiness (Lou & Kim, 2019). As influencers play the same roles as celebrities in brand endorsements, their reputation becomes a key factor in determining the effectiveness of their endorsements in influencer marketing. Content creators with topic expertise who have an effect on followers' opinions and buying decisions are known as social media influencers. The credibility of SMI has a significant impact on the perception of social media users which in turn affects their purchase intention towards a brand-sponsored post and the brand's image.

Brand image is defined as the general image that consumers have of a brand, as well as its uniqueness in contrast to other brands (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2017). Consumers' knowledge and perceptions about a brand are referred to as brand image. According to a previous study, brand image is divided into two categories functional brand image and hedonic brand image (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2017). Hedonic brand image is associated with the emotions or feelings of customers toward brands, whereas functional brand image is focused on the brand's performance or consumption characteristics (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). A consumer's perception of a brand is influenced by various factors and paid posts by SMIs also play a role in shaping their perception of the promoted brand, be it negative or positive. Although SMI marketing will help to promote the brand and generate sales, the brand's image portrayed in the posted content must also be carefully planned.

In the case of social media influencers, they act as role models for their followers and have the power to influence their purchasing intentions. SMIs nowadays have a large following and have started to endorse sponsored items to advertise to their followers on a regular basis, which might pique followers' desire for material things or imitate the SMI (Lou & Kim, 2019). Followers have the tendency to make a purchase from an online shop or a physical shop when an SMI posts about it if they deem it interesting or useful for their use, especially when the SMI is someone the consumer deems credible (Lou & Kim, 2019; Lou, Ma, & Feng, 2020). Paid or sponsored social media posts by SMIs most of the time do not directly affect a consumer's purchasing intention, however, it is mediated by several factors and two of the most significant factors include the source credibility of SMIs and brand image (Chakraborty & Biswal, 2020; Radwan, Mousa, Mohamed, & Youssef, 2021). A follower of an SMI who sees a paid post may not always result in having a purchase intention, their trust in both the SMI and the brand promoted plays a significant part in arousing their interest in the product or services such as searching for more information regarding the product or visiting the physical or online stores to browse the product.

Research Framework
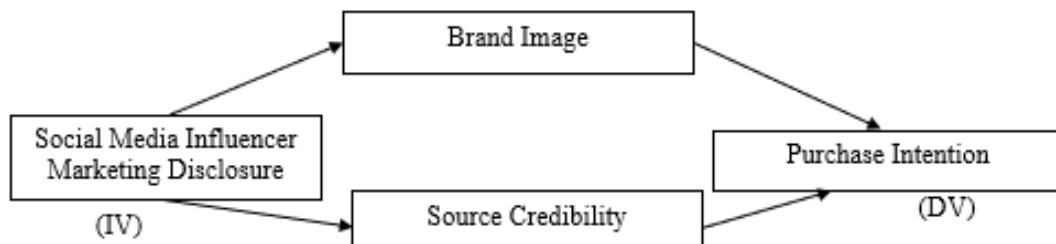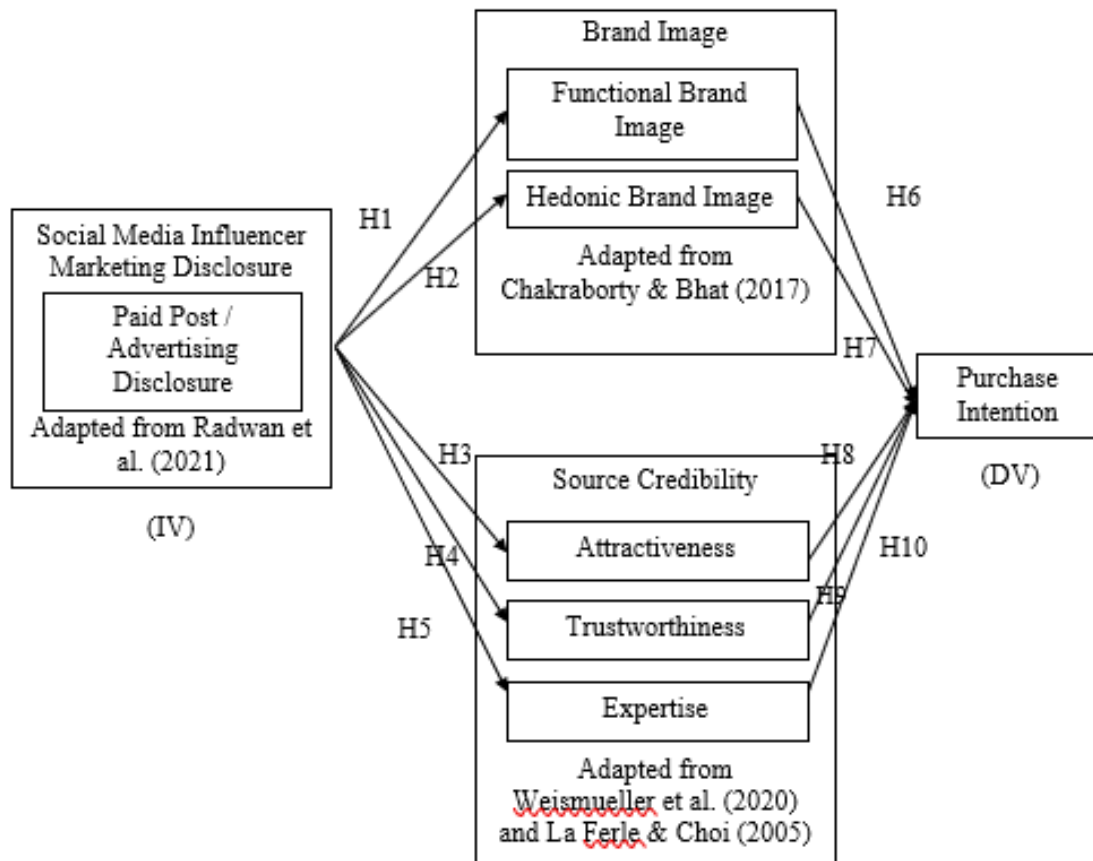

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 2: Research Framework

Research Hypothesis

Basically, there are ten hypotheses highlighted in the study. The first hypothesis (H1) highlights there is a positive influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure towards functional brand image among youth in Malaysia. The second hypothesis (H2) claims that there is a positive influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure toward hedonic brand image among youth in Malaysia. The third hypothesis (H3) reveals that there is a positive influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure towards the attractiveness of the source among youth in Malaysia. The fourth hypothesis (H4) states that there is a positive influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure towards the trustworthiness of the source among youth in Malaysia. The fifth hypothesis (H5) assures that there is a positive influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure towards the expertise of the source among youth in Malaysia. The sixth hypothesis (H6) specifies that there is a positive influence of functional brand image on purchase intention among youth in Malaysia. The seventh hypothesis (H7) spells out that there is a positive influence of hedonic brand image on purchase intention among youth in Malaysia. The eighth hypothesis (H8) suggests that there is a positive influence of the attractiveness of the source toward purchase intention among youth in Malaysia. The ninth hypothesis (H9) proposes that there is a positive influence of the trustworthiness of the source towards purchase intention among youth in Malaysia, and the tenth hypothesis proposes that there is a positive influence of expertise of the source towards purchase intention among youth in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used the quantitative method, and the respondents were given questionnaires to fill out in order to collect data through an online platform which is Google Form. Furthermore, the questionnaire is distributed to 111 youth aged between 15 to 30 years old in Malaysia who are active social media users and follow at least one SMI (La Ferle & Choi, 2005). Convenience sampling was used in the present study to obtain respondents' numbers and reduce sampling error. One of the inclusion criteria of the data collection includes the respondent's usage of the top 4 social media platforms in Malaysia which are Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. The convenience sampling approach used yielded a total of 111 answers with a full contribution. This translates to a response rate of 100%, which is sufficient to carry on with the study without replacing any forms that were not completed. The respondent's demographic profile is shown in Table 2.

A statistical analysis software application was utilized to analyze the data from the questionnaire survey. The program is called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and it is used to input all of the data from the study and create findings that may aid in the discovery. The correlation techniques of finding the proper quantity and completing accurate discoveries from the result will be employed when identifying the link between two independent and dependent variables. A reliability test is conducted on SPSS in order to make sure the data collected are reliable. The research variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree"). The measurements for the factors that were understudied in this study were adapted from earlier research as listed in Table 1. In order to ensure that the questionnaire's reliability reaches a specified level, the questions have been modified and taken from a number of previous studies.

Table 1: Research Instrument

SECTION	VARIABLE	ITEM CODE	QUESTIONS	SOURCE
A	Demographic	A1	Gender	(Lou & Kim, 2019) and (Santora, 2021).
		A2	Age	
		A3	Race	
		A4	Education Qualification	
		A5	Social media platforms used.	
		A6	How many social media influencers do you follow?	
		A7	Which social media platform do you use to follow social media influencers?	
B	Social Media Influencer - Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure	B1	I am able to differentiate between a paid post/advertising and a personal posting by the influencer(s).	(Radwan, et al., 2021). and (Lou & Feng, 2020).
		B2	I am aware if an influencer(s)' post is a paid post for an advertiser or brand.	
		B3	I prefer influencer(s) to disclose that his/her post is sponsored or paid by certain brands.	
		B4	I believe that there is at least one brand or product promoted by the influencer.	
C	Brand Image - Functional Brand Image	C1	Online posts by an influencer on a brand describe the brand's benefits.	(Chakraborty, & Bhat, 2017). and (Chakraborty, & Biswal, 2020).
		C2	Online posts by an influencer on a brand describe the brand's efficiency.	
		C3	Online posts by an influencer on a brand describe the brand's effectiveness.	
		C4	Online posts by an influencer on a brand describe the brand's accessibility to their product or services.	
		C5	Online posts by an influencer on a brand describe the brand's product or services offerings.	
D	Brand Image - Hedonic Brand Image	D1	Online posts by an influencer on a brand makes the brand attractive to me.	(Amaldi, et al., 2021) and (Chakraborty, & Bhat, 2017).
		D2	Online posts by an influencer on a brand makes the brand charming to me.	
		D3	Online posts by an influencer on a brand makes the brand fascinating to me.	
		D4	Online posts by an influencer on a brand makes the brand seem useful to me.	
		D5	Online posts by an influencer on a brand makes me perceive the brand has good quality products or service.	

E	Source Credibility - Attractiveness	E1	The social media influencer(s) is very attractive.	Lou & Kim, 2019) and (Thusyanthy, 2018).
		E2	The social media influencer(s) is very stylish.	
		E3	The social media influencer(s) is good looking.	
		E4	The social media influencer(s) is elegant.	
		E5	The social media influencer(s) is sexy.	
F	Source Credibility - Trustworthiness	F1	I feel the influencer(s) is honest.	(Müller, Mattke, & Maier, 2018) and (Lou & Kim, 2019).
		F2	I consider the influencer(s) trustworthy.	
		F3	I feel the influencer(s) is truthful.	
		F4	I consider the influencer(s) sincere.	
		F5	I feel the influencer(s) is dependable.	
G	Source Credibility - Expertise	G1	I feel the social media influencer(s) is knowledgeable.	(Lou & Kim, 2019) and (Dwivedi, Johnson, & McDonald, 2015).
		G2	I feel the social media influencer(s) is qualified to promote a brand or product.	
		G3	I feel the social media influencer(s) is an expert in his/her area.	
		G4	I feel the social media influencer(s) is sufficiently experienced to make assertions about his/her area.	
		G5	I feel the social media influencer(s) is a skilled person to represent the brand promoted.	
H	Purchase Intention	H1	I am likely to seek further product information promoted by the influencer(s).	(Lou & Kim, 2019) and (Lou, Ma, & Feng, 2020).
		H2	I am likely to visit online stores or physical stores because of social media influencers' posts.	
		H3	I am likely to purchase the products that social media influencer(s) have promoted if I happen to need one.	
		H4	I am interested in buying other products from the brand promoted by the influencer(s).	
		H5	I am likely to buy products that influencers are promoting to match or imitate them.	

Pilot Study

According to existing research, the sample size for the pilot study should be 10% of the sample anticipated for the bigger parent study which aims to collect data from a minimum of 100 respondents (Connelly, 2008). Thus, in the pilot study, a sample size of 20 was chosen to test the reliability, normality, and validity of the data.

Reliability

The reliability of test items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to measure the independent and dependent variables. A reliability test is performed to gauge how consistent and stable the data that was gathered is. The reliability will be measured using Cronbach's alpha, which will be represented by the coefficient alpha. Referring to Table 2, all reliability scores are above 0.6 which is considered an acceptable index. The acceptable value of Cronbach Alpha's is a value above 0.6 to be regarded as a reliable and respectable measure (Daud, Khidzir, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2018; Ghazali Darusalam, 2008; Pallant, 2013). This shows that all the variables that influence consumer's perceived brand image and purchase intention are consistent.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test Results

Section	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
B: Social Media Influencer - Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure	0.658	4
C: Brand Image - Functional Brand Image	0.849	5
D: Brand Image - Hedonic Brand Image	0.908	5
E: Source Credibility - Attractiveness	0.684	5
F: Source Credibility - Trustworthiness	0.932	5
G: Source Credibility - Expertise	0.872	5
H: Purchase Intention	0.852	5

Normality Test

Displayed in Table 3 are the Skewness and Kurtosis results from the pilot sample. Descriptive statistics are a useful tool for analyzing skew and kurtosis. Kurtosis is reasonable within a range of -10 to +10, while acceptable values of skewness fall between -3 and +3 (Griffin & Steinbrecher, 2013). The results in Table 5 indicate that the normality hypothesis is achieved.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Section	Skewness (-3 to +3)	Kurtosis (-10 to +10)
B: Social Media Influencer - Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure	-0.855	0.469
C: Brand Image - Functional Brand Image	-0.518	-0.703
D: Brand Image - Hedonic Brand Image	-0.069	-1.001
E: Source Credibility - Attractiveness	0.073	-0.166
F: Source Credibility - Trustworthiness	0.962	0.371
G: Source Credibility - Expertise	0.516	-0.227
H: Purchase Intention	0.027	-0.436

Validity

In order to ascertain the validity of the data, Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy tests were also utilized. According to previous research, the minimum required KMO measure is 0.5 (Arora, Kharb, Sinha, & Verma, 2019; Coakes & Ong, 2011). Referring to Table 4, the KMO measure was found to be more than 0.5 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (significant at p<0.001), indicating that factorability is presumed (Coakes & Ong, 2011). Furthermore, Bartlett's test significance value of less than 0.05 together with a value larger than 0.5

indicates that the data are significantly correlated (Coakes & Ong, 2011). Thus, the measured value of KMO and Bartlett's test in this pilot test are valid.

Table 4: Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) metric of sample adequacy are used to determine if factor analysis is suitable.

No.	Measure of factor analysis applicability	Measured Values
1	KMO Sufficiency of Sample Test	0.628
2	Bartlett's Test	
	Approx. Chi-Square	54.393
	df	21
	Sig.	<0.001

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile and General Information

The results from the demographic profile's gender, age, race, and education level are displayed in Table 5 below. The percentage distribution is 83.78% for women and 16.22% for men, with 93 and 18 women and men, respectively. A total of 111 individuals representing the whole Malaysian youth population participated in the questionnaire collection.

Table 5: Demographic profile of respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	18	16.22%
Female	93	83.78%
Age		
18 - 24 years old	58	52.25%
25 - 30 years old	53	47.75
Race		
Malay	107	96.40%
Indian	2	1.80%
Chinese	0	0%
Others	2	1.80%
Education Level		
High School	9	8.11%
Diploma	16	14.41%
Masters	10	9.01%

Table 6 shows the information related to the respondent's social media usage and their activity of following SMIs. The respondents are able to select up to four different social media networks that they usually connect to. The result shows that the majority of respondents use the social media platform, Instagram which has the majority count of 97.30%, followed by Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook. Most of the respondents use multiple social media platforms and results show that 87.39% of the respondents use Instagram to follow SMIs. TikTok and Twitter are tied after Instagram, followed by Facebook which is the least used platform to follow SMIs. Furthermore, interesting results are seen in the number of SMIs followed by respondents as 45.04% admitted they only follow one to five SMIs, while 30.63% followed more than 16 SMIs.

Table 6: General information of respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media Platforms Used		
Facebook	72	64.86%
Instagram	108	97.30%
TikTok	84	75.68%
Twitter	88	79.28%
Social media influencers followed.		
1-5 social media influencers	50	45.04%
6-10 social media influencers	23	20.72%
11-15 social media influencers	4	3.60%
More than 16 social media influencers	34	30.63%
Social media platforms used to follow social media influencers.		
Facebook	9	8.11%
Instagram	97	87.39%
TikTok	61	54.95%
Twitter	61	54.95%

Correlation Results

The link between the dependent variable and the independent variables has been examined using the Pearson correlation coefficient method. An acceptable correlation value must fall between -1 and +1 (Nettleton, 2014). The strength of a linear link between two variables is gauged by the Pearson correlation. Its value ranges from -1 to 1, with -1 denoting total linear negative correlation and +1 denoting total linear positive correlation (Bonett & Wright, 2000; Nettleton, 2014). As a result, it is valid because each segment for Pearson correlation is inside the allowed range as displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of Pearson Correlation

No.	Relationship	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (two-tailed)	Interpretation	Status
H1	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Functional Brand Image	0.402	ρ = <0.001	Moderate Correlation	Accepted
H2	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Hedonic Brand Image	0.270	ρ = 0.004	Weak Correlation	Accepted
H3	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Attractiveness	0.378	ρ = <0.001	Weak Correlation	Accepted
H4	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Trustworthiness	0.189	ρ = 0.047	Very Weak Correlation	Accepted
H5	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Expertise	0.102	ρ = 0.288	Very Weak Correlation	Accepted
H6	Functional Brand Image > Purchase Intention	0.233	ρ = 0.014	Weak Correlation	Accepted
H7	Hedonic Brand Image > Purchase Intention	0.552	ρ = <0.001	Moderate Correlation	Accepted
H8	Attractiveness > Purchase Intention	0.343	ρ = <0.001	Weak Correlation	Accepted

| H9 | Trustworthiness > Purchase Intention | 0.448 | ρ = <0.001 | Moderate Correlation | Accepted |
| H10 | Expertise > Purchase Intention | 0.476 | ρ = <0.001 | Moderate Correlation | Accepted |

Interpretation according to the meaning of Pearson correlation coefficient value (r) (Bonett & Wright, 2000).

The findings of the correlation study are shown in Table 7. Firstly, there is a significant correlation between social media influencer marketing paid post disclosure and the functional brand image among youth in Malaysia. This has given meaning to H1, which states that 40.2% of the functional brand image was moderately impacted by social media influencer marketing paid post disclosure among Malaysian youth. However, there is a weak correlation between social media influencer marketing and paid post disclosure toward hedonic brand image among youth in Malaysia with only a 27% correlation. Furthermore, H3 the influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure towards the attractiveness of the source among youth in Malaysia is weakly impacted (37.8%) and the same goes for the influence of social media influencer marketing paid posts disclosure towards the trustworthiness of the source (18.9%) as well as the expertise of the source (10.2%) among youth in Malaysia. In addition, H7 (55.2%), H9 (44.8%), and H10 (47.6%) all have moderate correlation. Lastly, H6 (23.3%) and H8 (34.3%) have a weak correlation.

Hence, there was a positive connection between the dependent variable and each independent variable, mediated by several variables. In the correlation test, Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure has the biggest influence on the youth's perception of a brand's Functional Brand Image (0.402), and Hedonic Brand Image has the biggest positive relation to the youth's purchase intention (0.552), while Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure showed the least correlation to Expertise of the source which are SMIs (0.102), and Functional Brand Image is least correlated to Malaysian youth's Purchase Intention (0.233).

Regression Results

Regression analysis was generated on SPSS to test the associations that had been hypothesized. A strong and adaptable method for examining the association between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables is regression analysis (Malhotra, Hall, Shaw, & Oppenheim, 2006). Apart from that, Durbin-Watson was used to measure first-order autocorrelation. The range of the Durbin-Watson statistic is 0–4 (Corporate Finance Institute. 2022). There is no first-order autocorrelation when the number is 2 or close to 2. The range of 1.50 to 2.50 is suitable. There is positive autocorrelation when successive error differences are minor, and Durbin-Watson is low (less than 1.5) (Corporate Finance Institute. 2022). Results in Table 8 show that the numbers are within the range and are all acceptable.

Table 8: Regression Analysis

No	Relationship	Regression (R)	R^2	Durbin Watson	Interpretation
H1	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Functional Brand Image	0.402	0.161	1.932	R=0.402 (Moderate Correlation) with R^2=0.161(16%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 1.932
H2	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Hedonic Brand Image	0.270	0.073	1.878	R=0.270 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.073 (7.3%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 1.878
H3	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Attractiveness	0.378	0.143	1.824	R=0.378 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.143 (14.3%) and

					Durbin Watson is acceptable = 1.824
H4	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Trustworthiness	0.189	0.036	1.876	R=0.189 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.036 (3.6%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 1.876
H5	Paid Post/Advertising Disclosure > Purchase Intention	0.102	0.10	1.983	R=0.102 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.10 (10%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 1.983
H6	Functional Brand Image > Purchase Intention	0.233	0.054	2.336	R=0.233 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.054 (5.4%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 2.336
H7	Hedonic Brand Image > Purchase Intention	0.552	0.305	2.189	R=0.552 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.305 (30.5%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 2.189
H8	Attractiveness > Purchase Intention	0.343	0.118	2.216	R=0.343 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.118 (11.8%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 2.216
H9	Trustworthiness > Purchase Intention	0.448	0.200	2.381	R=0.448 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.200 (20%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 2.381
H10	Expertise > Purchase Intention	0.476	0.227	2.077	R=0.476 (Low Correlation) with R^2=0.227 (22.7%) and Durbin Watson is acceptable = 2.077

Interpretation according to the meaning of Pearson correlation coefficient value (r) (Bonett & Wright, 2000).

Mediation Results Based on Andrew Hayes' PROCESS

Andrew Hayes' PROCESS (v3.3.) macro effects can be used to test for mediation effects (Hayes, 2022). Hayes Model 4 was used to analyze the indirect effect of the mediators in the relationship between social media influencer marketing disclosure and Malaysian youth's purchase intention. A moderation analysis with Andrew Hayes' PROCESS macro showed all mediators have positive indirect effects on the relationship between independent and dependent variables. There is also a significant moderating effect of Section D: Brand Image - Hedonic Brand Image (95% CI, 0.0988 to 0.5156) and E: Source Credibility - Attractiveness (95% CI, 0.0852 to 0.4408) on the relationship.

Table 9: Indirect effect of mediators between the independent variable and the dependent variable analysis.

Section (Mediator)	Indirect Effect	SE	95% CI		Interpretation
			Lower	Upper	
C: Brand Image - Functional Brand Image	0.1582	0.0948	-0.0078	0.3679	The indirect effect is positive, but non-significant.
D: Brand Image - Hedonic Brand Image	0.2829	0.1054	0.0988	0.5156	The indirect effect is positive and statistically significant.
E: Source Credibility - Attractiveness	0.2403	0.0902	0.0852	0.4408	The indirect effect is positive and statistically significant.

F: Source Credibility - Trustworthiness	0.1563	0.0900	-0.0057	0.3523	The indirect effect is positive, but non-significant.
G: Source Credibility - Expertise	0.0900	0.0896	-0.0673	0.2881	The indirect effect is positive, but non-significant.

Table 9 presents the analysis of the indirect effects of mediators between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The indirect effect is examined through the use of non-parametric bootstrapping. The population indirect impact is inferred to be 0 if the null of 0 is within the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval (Hayes, 2022). If 0 is outside of the confidence interval, it is assumed that the indirect effect is non-zero (Hayes, 2022). There was a significant moderating effect of Hedonic Brand Image under Brand Image (95% CI, 0.0988 to 0.5156), and Attractiveness under Source Credibility (95% CI, 0.0852 to 0.4408) for the relationship between paid post or advertising disclosure and purchase intentions among Malaysian youth. Additionally, the analysis in Table 9 indicates that Section C: Brand Image - Functional Brand Image, Section F: Source Credibility – Trustworthiness, and Section G: Source Credibility - Expertise have no mediation effects between social media influencer marketing disclosure and Malaysian youth's purchase intention.

DISCUSSION

Objective 1: *To discover the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on the source credibility of social media influencers among youth.*

The three dimensions of source credibility have proven to positively shape the youth's perception of SMIs' credibility. The three components that were measured are determinants to measure the source credibility of SMIs (Lou & Kim, 2019; Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar, 2020). According to the data analysis from 111 respondents, 14.3% of the respondents agree that the Attractiveness of the SMI is the most affected by social media influencer marketing disclosure, followed by Expertise (10%) and Trustworthiness (3.6%) of SMIs under source credibility. Consequently, the results of the data analysis have indicated that Social Media Influencer Marketing Disclosure positively influences Section E: Attractiveness, Section F: Trustworthiness, and Section G: Expertise, of SMIs under source credibility. Although there is a positive effect towards the perceived source credibility of social media influencers among Malaysian youth, the effect is very weak in the relationship.

Objective 2: *To explore the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on youth's perceived brand image.*

The data analysis of the study has found that social media influencer marketing disclosure has a moderate effect on Functional Brand Image (FBI) (r=0.402, R^2=0.161) compared to Hedonic Brand Image (HBI) which has a weak correlation of (r=0.27, R^2=0.073). The youth's perceived brand image is measured using two dimensions which are functional brand image and hedonic brand image (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2017). This indicates that the youth are more affected by the brand's performance or consumption characteristics which is the functional brand image Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). The Hedonic aspect of brand image which is the emotions or feelings of customers toward brands weakly affects the youth's perceived brand image. In addition, results also show that the mediator, brand image also has an effect on the relationship between social media influencer marketing disclosure and Malaysian youth's purchase intention. The indirect effects of both FBI and HBI are positive, however, the indirect effect of HBI is the only one that is significant.

Objective 3: *To discover the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on youth's purchasing intentions.*

Referring to the analysed data in Table 9, the effect of social media influencer marketing disclosure on youth's purchasing intentions is applicable only to two sections of mediators which are Hedonic Brand Image under Brand Image (95% CI, 0.0988 to 0.5156), and Attractiveness under Source Credibility (95% CI, 0.0852 to 0.4408). There was a significant positive moderating effect on Malaysian youth's purchasing intentions by these two dimensions. The rest of the mediators have shown a positive indirect effect on the youth's purchase intentions; however, it is not significant. Thus, based on the findings, there is a positive effect between the independent and dependent variables.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the findings have proven that social media influencer marketing disclosure has positively impacted purchase intentions among Malaysian youth. The relationship, however, is mediated by both Brand Image and Source Credibility. The Brand Image and Source Credibility of social media influencers have been found to have a positive influence on the youth's purchasing behavior, however, the relationship is weak. The youth are not strongly affected by social media influencer marketing disclosure. Thus, the purchase intentions of Malaysian youth are not heavily influenced by social media influencer marketing disclosure according to the research findings.

There are several limitations faced in conducting this research. Firstly, the breadth of generalization has been limited by the convenience sampling technique used in the data collection process. The sample size (N=111) is relatively small and cannot be generalized. However, the outcome discussed in the prior section offers some insight into Malaysian youth's perception of SMIs and the practice of the marketing technique. Secondly, this research is restricted to Malaysian youth who follow SMIs on the top four social media platforms. Future studies on different countries and age groups should be conducted. Finally, the research only considers social media influencer marketing disclosure on the youth's perceived brand image and purchase intention. Longitudinal studies can be undertaken to study the consumer's perception of disclosure and non-disclosure of social media advertisements as well as the perception towards honesty and transparency in distributed advertising. In other countries such as the USA and South Korea, disclosure of advertisements is heavily monitored and consumers take the matter very seriously, it would be an interesting take to investigate the perception of Malaysians as well as its current regulations.

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