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**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (SMIs)
ON PURCHASING INTENTIONS
AMONG MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**



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**MASTER OF SCIENCES (MANAGEMENT)
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MAC 2024**

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INTENTIONS AMONG MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

By

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UUM
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ABSTRACT

The study "The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchasing Intentions Among Malaysian University Students" provides an in-depth examination of the dynamic role social media influencers play in guiding the decision-making processes of consumers, particularly in digital marketing. This study aims to assess the extent to which the perceived credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level of influencers can sway consumer behavior, specifically the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students. Employing a quantitative research design, data was meticulously gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to 150 Malaysian university students. This sample was strategically chosen to reflect the target demographic most affected by influencer marketing. The data collected was rigorously analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Spearman's correlation method was utilized to establish the relationship between the perceived attributes of social media influencers and the purchasing intentions of the respondents. The findings revealed a statistically significant correlation, underscoring the profound influence that social media influencers have on the purchasing intentions of young consumers. The attributes of influencers were found to be powerful predictors of purchasing behavior, indicating that the more favorable the perception of the influencer's attributes, the stronger the intention to purchase. This study not only advances the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing's impact on consumer behavior but also offers practical insights for marketers aiming to leverage influencer partnerships more effectively. It recognizes the evolving nature of consumer-influencer dynamics and the necessity for brands to adapt to these changes to maintain relevance in the digital marketing landscape. The study's conclusions serve as a foundational reference for future research while acknowledging the constraints and opportunities for further exploration in this burgeoning field.

Keywords: *social media influence, influencer marketing, consumer behavior, Malaysian university students, purchasing intentions*

ABSTRAK

Kajian "Kesan Pengaruh Media Sosial terhadap Niat Pembelian Pelajar Universiti Malaysia" menyediakan pemeriksaan yang mendalam tentang peranan dinamik yang dimainkan oleh pengaruh media sosial dalam memandu proses pembuatan keputusan pengguna, khususnya dalam bidang pemasaran digital. Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menilai sejauh mana kebolehpercayaan, kepakaran, daya tarikan, dan tahap penglibatan yang dirasai oleh pengaruh dapat mempengaruhi tingkah laku pengguna, khususnya niat pembelian pelajar universiti Malaysia. Dengan menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan secara teliti melalui soal selidik yang terstruktur yang diedarkan kepada 150 pelajar universiti Malaysia. Sampel ini dipilih secara strategik untuk mencerminkan demografi sasaran yang paling terjejas oleh pemasaran pengaruh. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis dengan ketat menggunakan Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) versi 26. Kaedah korelasi Spearman digunakan untuk menentukan hubungan antara atribut pengaruh media sosial yang dirasai dan niat pembelian responden. Penemuan menunjukkan korelasi yang signifikan secara statistik, menekankan pengaruh mendalam yang dimiliki pengaruh media sosial terhadap niat pembelian pengguna muda. Atribut pengaruh didapati sebagai ramalan yang kuat tentang tingkah laku pembelian, menunjukkan bahawa semakin menguntungkan persepsi atribut pengaruh, semakin kuat niat untuk membeli. Kajian ini tidak hanya memajukan pemahaman teori tentang kesan pemasaran pengaruh terhadap tingkah laku pengguna tetapi juga menawarkan wawasan praktikal untuk pemasar yang bertujuan untuk memanfaatkan kerjasama pengaruh dengan lebih berkesan. Ia mengiktiraf sifat yang berkembang dari dinamika pengguna-pengaruh dan keperluan untuk jenama beradaptasi dengan perubahan ini untuk kekal relevan dalam landskap pemasaran digital. Kesimpulan kajian berfungsi sebagai rujukan asas untuk penyelidikan masa depan sambil mengakui batasan dan peluang untuk penyelidikan lanjut dalam bidang yang berkembang ini.

Kata kunci: pengaruh media sosial, pemasaran pengaruh, tingkah laku pengguna, pelajar universiti Malaysia, niat pembelian

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TABLE OF CONTENT

PERMISSION TO USE	i
ABSTRACT	ii-iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENT	v-vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1-4
1.2 Problem Statement.....	4-5
1.3 Research Question	6
1.4 Research Objective	6
1.5 Significant of the Study	7-8
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study	9-10
1.7 Management of Thesis.....	10-11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1 Introduction	12-13
2.2 Relevant Concepts in Studying the Relationship between SMIs and Purchasing Intentions of Malaysian University Students	14
2.2.1 Social Media Influencers	14-15
2.2.2 Consumer Purchasing Intentions	15-17
2.2.3 Influencer Credibility	18-19
2.2.4 Engagement Level	20-22
2.2.5 Demographic Factors.....	22-23
2.2.6 Para-social Relationships with SMI.....	24-25
2.3 Operational Definition	26-27
2.4 Relationship between Attributes and Purchasing Intentions	28
2.4.1 Trustworthiness	28
2.4.2 Expertise	29
2.4.3 Attractiveness	29
2.4.4 Engagement Level	30
2.4.5 Other Relevant Studies	30-32
2.5 Hypotheses.....	33-34
2.6 Theoretical Framework.....	35-36

2.7	Underpinning Theory.....	37
2.7.1	Source Credibility Theory	37
2.7.2	Uses and Gratifications Theory	38
2.8	Conclusion.....	39
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		40
3.1	Introduction	40
3.2	Research Framework	40
3.3	Research Design... ..	41
3.4	Population Sample & Sampling Technique	42-43
3.5	Questionnaire Design.....	44-45
3.6	Research Strategy	46
3.7	Data Collection and Analysis... ..	46- 47
3.8	Validity and Reliability Analysis.....	47 - 48
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS... ..		49
4.1	Introduction... ..	49
4.2	Descriptive Statistics on Demographic Profile	49
4.2.1	Gender	50
4.2.2	Age	50
4.2.3	Education.....	51
4.2.4	University	52-54
4.2.5	Following Influencer on Social Media	54-55
4.2.6	Purchased from Influencer Recommendation.....	55
4.2.7	Frequently Used Social Media.....	56-57
4.2.8	Time Spent per Day for Social Media	57
4.2.9	Purchase Type Through Social Media.....	58
4.3	Descriptive Statistics on Influencer Attributes and Purchasing Intentions	59
4.3.1	Descriptive Statistics using Mean and Standard Deviation	59-61
4.4	Inferential Analysis	62
4.4.1	Spearman's Correlation Analysis	62-64
4.5	Summary.....	65-67
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....		68
5.1	Introduction	68-69
5.2	Discussion	70
5.2.1	Demographic Profile of the respondents	70-72
5.2.2	Spearman's Correlation Analysis	73-74
5.3	Suggestions for Future Research	75-77

5.4	Implications	78-80
5.5	Conclusion	81-82
REFERENCES.....		83-88
Appendix 1: Cover Letter for Questionnaire		89
Appendix 2: Questionnaire		90-104
Appendix 3: Demographics		105-106
Appendix 4: Social Media Usage		107
Appendix 5: Descriptive Analysis		108
Appendix 6: G-Power Analysis		108
Appendix 7: Spearman’s Correlation		109
Appendix 8: Reliability Analysis		109
Appendix 9: Validity Analysis		110



LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.2.1: Descriptive Statistics of Gender...	50
Table 4.2.2: Descriptive Statistics of Age	50
Table 4.2.3: Descriptive Statistics of Education	51
Table 4.2.4: Descriptive Statistics of University	52
Table 4.2.5: Descriptive Statistics of Following Influences in Social Media	54
Table 4.2.6: Descriptive Statistics of Purchased from Influencer Recommendation in Social Media... ..	55
Table 4.2.7: Descriptive Statistics of Frequently Used Social Media.....	56
Table 4.2.8: Descriptive Statistics of Time Spent per Day for Social Media	57
Table 4.2.9: Descriptive Statistics of Purchase Type Through Social Media.....	58
Table 4.3.1: Descriptive Statistics of Influencer Attributes and Purchasing Intentions... ..	59
Table 4.4.1: Spearman's Correlation - Relationship between Influencer Attributes and Purchasing Intentions	62
Table 4.6.1: Hypotheses Summary	66



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.5: Theoretical Framework	35
Figure 3.2: Research Framework... ..	40



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
SMI	= Social Media Influence



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the digital age, the rise of social media influencers (SMIs) marks a paradigm shift in marketing communication, fundamentally altering consumer engagement strategies. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become vital for businesses, offering a cost-effective and ubiquitous medium to foster customer relationships, enhance brand visibility, and facilitate direct interaction with consumers. This evolution underscores the strategic importance of social media marketing in today's interactive economy, where brands leverage these platforms to maintain consumer relationships and connect with a broader audience base (Hanaysha, 2016; Hanaysha, 2018).

As digital platforms integrate seamlessly into daily life, they have emerged as significant influencers of consumer behaviour. This trend is particularly pronounced in Malaysia, where a digital revolution is underway, driving consumers towards online platforms for diverse needs, including shopping (Chun et al., 2018). Within this digital landscape, influencer marketing has surfaced as a critical phenomenon, with SMIs utilizing their online presence and perceived celebrity status to significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020). These influencers, by crafting an authentic personal brand, act as a bridge between businesses and target consumers, employing novel marketing forms like native advertising and branded content to engender a highly credible form of word-of-mouth communication (Lee et al., 2022; Croes & Bartels, 2021).

The influence of SMIs extends beyond mere brand promotion, as they actively shape public opinion, modify consumer preferences, and foster brand engagement. This dynamic is especially evident among university students, a demographic profoundly affected by the digital narratives propagated by influencers. Influencers' impact on this group underscores the necessity of understanding the nuanced relationship between influencer-driven marketing strategies and consumer behaviour (Ahmad. A. et al., 2020).

Joshi et al. (2023) delineates the unique position of SMIs in the marketing ecosystem. Unlike traditional celebrities, these influencers build extensive follower networks through direct engagement and personal branding on social media. This grassroots approach allows for a deeper connection with their audience, distinguishing them from conventional celebrities and public figures. Their evolution from hobbyists to professionals underscores the allure of influencer marketing, with influencers now segmenting into micro-, meso-, and macro-categories based on follower count, each serving distinct marketing functions.

These influencers, as detailed by Joshi et al. (2023), are not just third-party endorsers but are seen as microcelebrities and trusted tastemakers who significantly influence their followers' attitudes, behaviours, and purchasing decisions. Their role in crafting sponsored content that resonates with and enhances a brand's image underscores the critical nature of the influencer-follower relationship in driving engagement and loyalty. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing is contingent upon navigating the complexities of consumer behaviour, highlighting the necessity for a comprehensive

understanding of the factors influencing consumer responses to influencer-promoted brands.

Furthermore, Ao et al. (2023) highlights the exponential growth of the influencer marketing sector, which has expanded from \$1.7 billion in 2016 to an estimated \$16.4 billion by 2022. This growth exemplifies the pivotal role of influencers in modern marketing strategies, with a notable majority of marketers now employing influencer marketing as a crucial advertising tactic.

The contemporary influence of social media and networking sites on information dissemination and entertainment, especially amid the e-commerce boom and lifestyle shifts prompted by COVID-19, has positioned social media as a primary information source. Influencer marketing, evolving as a hybrid of traditional and new marketing techniques, offers an effective counter to ad blocking behaviours, relying on authentic connections between influencers and audiences to ensure that advertising messages reach their intended targets (Fred Chan, 2022.).

This thesis integrates insights from scholars and industry experts to explore the significant impact of social media influencers on the purchasing behaviors of Malaysian university students. It aims to comprehensively analyze how influencers, evolving within the digital media landscape, substantially shape the attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions of this demographic. The study focuses on evaluating the relationships between influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level, and their influence on purchasing intentions. By conducting an in-depth examination of these key influencer characteristics, the study

strives to contribute meaningful insights to both academic discourse and practical marketing strategies. This approach addresses the complex dynamics of influencer impact on consumer decision-making in the digital era, with a particular emphasis on the specificities of Malaysian university students.

1.2 Problem Statement

The integration of social media into modern marketing strategies marks a significant paradigm shift, focusing on digital platforms for brand promotion and consumer engagement. With over 3.6 billion social media users worldwide, the importance of these platforms in targeted marketing efforts is increasingly apparent (Freberg et al., 2011). Influencer marketing, leveraging the credibility and reach of social media influencers (SMIs), has emerged as a key approach, profoundly influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Dean, 2019).

This trend highlights a move from traditional advertising to more direct and personalized communication channels between brands and consumers. Influencers, with their authentic personal brands and compelling storytelling, have become crucial in marketing campaigns, significantly contributing to product promotion and brand appeal (Talavera, 2015). This engagement is predominantly driven by influencers' perceived trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level, especially among university students.

However, a gap exists in research regarding the specific impact of influencer marketing on the consumer behavior of university students in Malaysia. The overall influence of SMIs as trendsetters and domain experts is recognized, but detailed studies on how they

shape this demographic's purchasing decisions are limited (Chun et al., 2018). Furthermore, the relationship between key influencer characteristics and the purchasing habits of Malaysian university students requires more exploration, particularly given the evolving digital landscape.

Recent studies have started exploring the transformative role of influencers in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. However, the need for deeper investigation into the direct effects of influencer characteristics on consumer behavior persists, as current academic understanding of these mechanisms is still developing (Ahmad. A. et al., 2020; Akram, W., et al., 2017; Bevilacqua & Del, 2018).

This thesis addresses these gaps by examining the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing habits of Malaysian university students, particularly focusing on how trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement levels influence purchasing intentions. By centering on Malaysian higher education institutions, this study aims to unravel the intricate dynamics between influencers and this specific demographic, shedding light on the efficacy of influencer marketing in this context. This study is positioned to make a significant contribution to the understanding of modern marketing behaviors and practices, particularly influencer marketing's role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions.

1.3 Research Question

In accordance with the defined objectives, this study will address the following questions:

1. Does trustworthiness have significant relationship on purchasing intentions?
2. Does expertise have significant relationship on purchasing intentions?
3. Does attractiveness have significant relationship on purchasing intentions?
4. Does engagement level have significant relationship on purchasing intentions?

1.4 Research Objective

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To measure the relationship between trustworthiness and purchasing intentions (PI).
2. To measure the relationship between expertise and purchasing intentions (PI).
3. To measure the relationship between attractiveness and purchasing intentions (PI).
4. To measure the relationship between engagement level and purchasing intentions (PI).

1.5 Significant of the Study

This study holds critical importance across academic, business, and societal domains. It delves into the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions, with a specific focus on Malaysian university students. This study fills a significant gap in current literature by examining the influence of social media influencers within the Malaysian context, a group that has not been extensively explored in existing research. It aims to enrich academic discourse on digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior theories, providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of influencer marketing attributes like trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level.

For marketers and business owners, comprehending the dynamics of influencer marketing and its effect on consumer purchasing decisions is crucial for refining marketing strategies. This study offers practical insights on how brands can effectively utilize influencers to resonate with their target audience, thereby enhancing brand awareness, customer engagement, and ultimately, sales performance. The insights gleaned may guide businesses in tailoring their influencer marketing strategies to align more closely with the preferences and behaviors of young consumers, especially in Malaysia.

This study also highlights the necessity for transparency, authenticity, and ethical standards in influencer marketing. It underscores the development of clear guidelines and policies for influencer marketing practices, advocating for transparency in partnerships and endorsements to maintain consumer trust and uphold digital marketing integrity.

Moreover, the study illuminates the broader societal impact of influencer marketing, particularly its influence on the values, lifestyles, and consumption habits of young consumers. Understanding the persuasive techniques of influencer marketing allows stakeholders to foster responsible consumption patterns and contribute positively to societal well-being. Overall, this study is poised to make significant contributions in various domains, including shaping marketing practices, empowering consumers, guiding educational efforts, and stimulating discussions on the legal and cultural ramifications of influencer marketing in the university student demographic.



1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

While this study endeavours to illuminate the intricate dynamics between social media influencers, their perceived credibility, and consumer purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students, it is imperative to recognize certain limitations inherent to the research design and methodology. One notable limitation pertains to the representativeness of the sample. The study's findings are derived from a relatively narrow cohort of Malaysian university students, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to the broader population. Consequently, the extent to which these findings can be extrapolated to other demographic groups or cultural contexts may be constrained. Cultural, economic, and social differences can influence consumer behaviour and the effectiveness of influencer marketing, suggesting that the results may not be directly applicable to populations outside of this context.

Another significant limitation concerns the diversity of influencers examined within the study. The study primarily focuses on a specific subset of influencers, potentially overlooking the nuanced differences in impact between various types of influencers, such as micro-influencers versus macro-influencers. This limitation may mean that the study does not fully capture the entire spectrum of influencers' influence on consumer purchasing decisions.

Additionally, the reliance on survey methodology introduces potential constraints. The validity of the findings heavily depends on the accuracy and truthfulness with which respondents report their interactions with social media influencers and their resultant purchasing intentions. The inherent subjectivity of self-reported data introduces a layer of uncertainty, necessitating cautious interpretation of the results.

The digital marketing landscape, particularly influencer marketing, evolves rapidly. Findings that are relevant at the time of the study may become outdated as new platforms emerge, and consumer preferences shift. This dynamic nature poses a challenge to the long-term applicability of the research conclusions.

Despite these limitations, the study significantly advances our understanding of the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour, specifically within the context of Malaysian university students. By acknowledging these limitations, this study lays a solid foundation for future studies aiming to refine, expand, and deepen the insights into the complex relationships between influencers, their credibility, and their impact on consumer purchasing behaviours.

1.7 Management of Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each serving a distinct purpose within the broader research framework. Chapter 1 establishes the foundation of the study by providing the background, articulating the problem statement, and delineating the research questions and objectives. It also outlines the scope and limitations of the study, defines key terms, and describes the overall organization of the thesis, setting the stage for the detailed analysis that follows.

Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to the research topic. This literature review forms a scholarly base that supports the analytical and experimental segments of the thesis, ensuring that the investigation is grounded in relevant academic discourse.

In Chapter 3, the methodology used throughout the research is detailed. This includes the research framework, development of hypotheses or propositions, and an explanation of the research design. It also covers operational definitions, measurement of variables or instrumentation, data collection methods including sampling, and data collection procedures. Additionally, this chapter outlines the techniques used for data analysis, providing a comprehensive overview of the methods employed to ensure the rigor and reliability of the findings.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the analysis and findings of the research. It describes the data gathered and the analytical processes used, presenting the results in a format that highlights key findings. Depending on the complexity and breadth of data, this chapter may extend over multiple sections. It integrates the research findings with the existing body of literature, assessing how the results support or contradict prior studies.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, synthesizes the key findings in relation to the research objectives and underscores their significance in terms of theoretical, practical, and policy implications. This chapter also offers recommendations for future research, suggesting areas that could benefit from further exploration based on the insights and limitations identified during the study. This structure ensures a thorough and coherent presentation of the research process from beginning to end, providing substantial insights into the designated field of study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The ascendancy of social media as a quintessential marketing platform has irrevocably altered the paradigms of brand communication and consumer engagement. This transformation is not confined to younger demographics but spans across generations, leveraging the ubiquity and immediacy of social media networks. These platforms, endowed with interactive functionalities such as live chats and comments, enable unprecedented direct engagement between brands and their patrons. The very architecture of social media facilitates a dynamic where users not only consume content but actively partake in brand narrative co-creation through gestures as simple as "likes" or as articulated as comments and reviews.

Amidst this digital zeitgeist, the emergence of social media influencers (SMIs) as pivotal arbiters of consumer decision-making marks a significant evolution in marketing strategies. Defined by their domain-specific expertise and expansive digital footprints, these individuals command the ability to sway public opinion and consumer behaviour more authentically and persuasively than traditional celebrity endorsements. This authenticity, perceived through the prism of personal anecdotes and expert insights shared by influencers, engenders a trust quotient arguably higher than conventional marketing channels.

The scholarly discourse surrounding influencer marketing is burgeoning, reflecting a keen academic and practical interest in understanding the intricacies of influencer-consumer dynamics. Researchers have embarked on empirical explorations into how the distinct characteristics of influencers—ranging from their perceived trustworthiness and expertise to their aesthetic appeal and engagement levels—translate into tangible marketing outcomes like purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and consumer engagement. Yet, this body of research is characterized by heterogeneity in findings, underscoring the complexity of quantifying the influencer impact. Discrepancies abound, with studies revealing divergent outcomes regarding the efficacy of influencers' attributes in engendering consumer engagement and driving purchase intentions. Such variances spotlight the embryonic state of consensus within the field, illuminating the imperative for a nuanced understanding that can guide both theoretical exploration and practical application.

In addressing the call for clarity, this literature review endeavours to distill the essence of influencer marketing's impact on consumer purchasing decisions, with a concentrated focus on the Malaysian university student demographic. Through a meticulous examination of influencer marketing's foundational elements and the variegated effects of influencers' attributes on consumer behaviour, this review aspires to advance the academic dialogue.

2.2 Relevant Concepts in Studying the Relationship between SMIs and Purchasing Intentions of Malaysian University Students

2.2.1 Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers (SMIs) have emerged as pivotal figures in the realm of digital marketing, distinguished from traditional celebrities by their unique trajectory to fame. Unlike celebrities who gain recognition through conventional media and then extend their presence to social media, influencers cultivate their following directly on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and blogs (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This grassroots approach to building an audience has endowed SMIs with a sense of authenticity and relatability that resonates strongly with consumers (Lin, Bruning & Swarna, 2018). Influencers engage with niche audiences across diverse topics, with beauty and fashion emerging as particularly popular categories among young, predominantly female, demographics (Annalect Finland, 2017). This specificity allows influencers to deeply influence consumer behaviour, guiding trends and setting beauty standards predominantly proliferated through Instagram (Harper, 2019).

Influencers operate by creating content that not only maintains their authentic voice but also aligns with their audience's interests, making their sponsored posts more trustworthy than traditional advertisements (Ooi et al., 2023). Their effectiveness as marketing tools is recognized in the strategy of influencer marketing, which involves leveraging influencers' capacity to influence potential buyers and disseminate a brand's message to a broader audience (De Jans, Van de Sompel, De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). The Association of National Advertisers (2022) underscores influencer marketing's emphasis on individuals who command significant sway over potential consumers, integrating them into marketing strategies to amplify brand visibility.

In the digital landscape, influencers distinguish themselves by actively engaging with their followers, often in a reciprocal manner that enhances their relatability and approachability. This contrasts with traditional celebrities, whose fame does not originate from social media. Influencers' ability to seamlessly integrate sponsored content into their everyday narratives enhances the authenticity of their endorsements, resonating with consumers and fostering a sense of trust (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

The impact of influencers on consumer behaviour, particularly in online shopping, is significant. The authenticity inherent in their endorsements acts as a cornerstone for their influence, with their credibility—encompassing attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness—mediating consumer perceptions. These attributes critically shape university students' attitudes and purchasing intentions, highlighting the role of influencers in guiding buying behaviours and the strategic importance of their endorsements in marketing.

2.2.2 Consumer Purchasing Intentions

Within the domain of marketing research, purchasing intentions serve as a pivotal indicator of a consumer's likelihood to buy a product or service, fundamentally predicting future buying behaviour. This concept, deeply rooted in consumer psychology, is influenced by myriad factors, including the emerging influence of social media influencers (SMIs). These digital personas, through their unique path to fame and credibility, have redefined traditional marketing paradigms, offering a new lens through which consumer purchasing intentions can be understood and anticipated. Influencers,

by leveraging platforms like Instagram and blogs, have cultivated dedicated followings by sharing content that resonates with their audience, thus bridging the gap between brands and consumers more authentically than ever before (Ajzen, 1991; Ooi et al., 2023; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

The journey of consumer purchasing unfolds through a series of stages—Need recognition, Information search, Evaluation of alternatives, Purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. This decision-making process is crucial for marketers to comprehend, as it highlights the moments where consumers are most susceptible to influence. Influencers primarily impact the Information search and Evaluation of alternatives stages, where their endorsements can sway consumer opinions and preferences significantly. The authentic and engaging content produced by influencers not only attracts consumers but also fosters a sense of trust and relatability, making their recommendations highly influential (Dr. Fred Chan, 2022.; Hoyer et al., 2010).

Research has underscored the significance of influencer credibility in determining the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies. Studies reveal that consumers, particularly young adults, prioritize authenticity and expertise in influencers over mere attractiveness or product alignment. This trend reflects a broader shift in consumer values towards seeking genuine and relatable marketing messages. However, the literature also presents divergent findings, indicating a complex relationship between influencer characteristics and their impact on consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions. For instance, while some studies highlight the paramount importance of credibility and expertise, others suggest varying degrees of influence exerted by these attributes on consumer behaviour (Ayob et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2017).

The intricacies of predicting purchasing intentions, influenced by consumer behaviour, perceptions, and the nuanced impact of influencers, present both challenges and opportunities for marketers. The decision-making process of consumers, enriched by influencers' content, underscores the need for a strategic approach in selecting influencers whose values and audience align with the brand's target demographic. This strategic alignment is crucial for optimizing the impact of influencer marketing on purchasing intentions, especially in targeted demographics such as Malaysian university students. The existing body of research, while extensive, highlights the need for further empirical exploration to reconcile conflicting findings and provide more definitive guidance on the effective use of influencer marketing in shaping consumer purchasing decisions (Dr. Fred Chan, 2022.; Ooi et al., 2023).

Considering the evolving landscape of influencer marketing and its proven impact on consumer purchasing intentions, it is imperative for future research to delve deeper into this phenomenon. By expanding the scope of investigation to include diverse consumer demographics and exploring the multifaceted influences of influencer characteristics on purchasing behaviour, scholars and practitioners alike can gain richer insights into the strategic application of influencer marketing. Such endeavours will not only augment the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing's role within the broader marketing ecosystem but also equip marketers with the knowledge to harness this dynamic tool more effectively in their strategies.

2.2.3 Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility stands as a pivotal element in the efficacy of social media marketing, particularly within the context of endorsements. The persuasiveness of a social media influencer (SMI) is intricately linked to their perceived credibility by their audience, which significantly affects consumer attitudes towards both the endorsement message and the brand itself. This credibility is cultivated through a combination of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, attributes that collectively enhance the influencer's ability to impact consumer behaviour effectively (Ooi et al., 2023).

The credibility of an influencer is multi-faceted, resting on the perception of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Expertise reflects the influencer's knowledge and professional experience, making it a crucial factor for consumers when considering the content shared by influencers. Trustworthiness develops over time through consistent and genuine interaction, fostering a relationship where followers feel confident in the influencer's recommendations. Attractiveness extends beyond physical features, encapsulating personality traits and the influencer's ability to resonate with their audience on a personal level. These characteristics are essential for brands to consider when selecting influencers to ensure alignment with their marketing objectives and target audience preferences (Lou & Yuan, 2018; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1970; McGuire, 1985).

Influencers with high credibility are more likely to influence consumer behaviour, providing useful information that enhances the effectiveness of marketing promotions. This influence is particularly pronounced in how consumers respond to campaigns led by credible celebrities or influencers, with positive responses significantly increasing

the likelihood of following the influencer's advice. Studies have underscored the role of influencer credibility in not only driving customer engagement but also in impacting purchase intentions, highlighting the direct correlation between an influencer's credibility and their ability to sway consumer decisions (Ao et al., 2023).

The digital engagement strategies employed by influencers, especially on platforms like Instagram, play a crucial role in their credibility. By presenting products or services through engaging and authentic formats, influencers create content that genuinely reflects their real-life experiences and insights, thus shaping consumer perceptions about the quality and benefits of the promoted items. Authenticity and trustworthiness, particularly among micro-influencers who maintain a closer relationship with their audience, are critical in enhancing the influencer's impact on consumer attitudes and behaviours (Lee et al., 2022).

For Malaysian university students, who heavily rely on online resources for information and decision-making, influencer endorsements serve as a significant source of influence. The personalized interaction and engagement strategies adopted by influencers resonate with this demographic, facilitating a deeper connection and influence over their purchasing decisions. The use of interactive features on social media platforms further enables influencers to forge relatable and authentic connections, making influencer marketing a highly effective strategy in reaching and influencing university students in Malaysia (Lee et al., 2022).

2.2.4 Engagement Level

Engagement, as conceptualized by Hollebeek (2011), encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activities of customers in response to marketing efforts. This multifaceted construct extends to indirect customer engagement activities such as incentivized referrals, social media interactions about products or brands, and customers' responses and feedback to companies, highlighting the broader implications of engagement beyond direct transactions (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

The role of social media in enhancing business performance and shareholder value through increased engagement is well-documented. Research by Danaher and Dagger (2013) and Kumar et al. (2013) underscores the positive correlation between social media expenditure and firm performance, suggesting that both social media and customer word-of-mouth (WOM) contribute to a higher return on investment (ROI). This relationship between engagement and ROI is further elaborated by Kumar and Pansari (2016), emphasizing the strategic importance of integrating social media with promotional activities to foster digital engagement. Brands like Adidas exemplify this approach by focusing their advertising efforts predominantly on digital and social platforms, underscoring the centrality of digital engagement in contemporary marketing strategies (McCarthy, 2017).

Engagement is increasingly recognized as a context-specific phenomenon, varying significantly across different social media platforms. This variability necessitates a nuanced understanding of engagement that accounts for the unique experiences and expectations associated with each platform. The engagement experience framework, proposed by Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016), offers valuable insights into the

interactions between consumers and media, highlighting the importance of engagement intensity and valence in measuring context-specific engagement. This framework aids in predicting the effectiveness of advertising by examining the specific thoughts and feelings elicited by rich experiences in pursuit of personal goals, thereby enriching our comprehension of social media engagement and its impact on advertising outcomes.

The capacity of engagement to influence consumer behaviour, particularly among Malaysian university students, is profound. This demographic, known for its active participation in social media and responsiveness to current trends, is especially receptive to influencer campaigns that employ relevant hashtags and interactive content. Studies by Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011), and others emphasize the role of engagement in affecting advertisement evaluations, suggesting that higher levels of consumer engagement with media content can enhance the favourability of advertisements embedded within these platforms. Engagement not only primes consumers but also facilitates mood congruency and congruity between influencers and their followers, enhancing the receptivity to and effectiveness of social media advertisements (Dahlen, 2005; Malthouse, Calder, & Tamhane, 2007).

Borrowing from Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016), engagement emerges as a multidimensional construct that evolves from consumers' interactions with social media, affecting their attitudes towards social issues and purchasing intentions. The active and passive ways in which users engage with social media content—ranging from merely surfing to actively commenting and sharing posts—highlight the diverse nature of engagement experiences. These experiences contribute to shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours towards brands, underscoring the significance of effectively

engaging consumers with brand-related social media content to enhance brand image and consumer acceptance of marketing messages (Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, 2016; Escalas & Bettman, 2017; McCracken, 1989).

2.2.5 Demographic Factors

Understanding the intricacies of demographic factors—age, gender, and education level—provides a nuanced view of how consumers interact with social media influencers and the resulting impact on their purchasing decisions. These factors play a pivotal role in moderating the relationship between the characteristics of influencers and consumer purchasing intentions, offering a rich vein of insights for marketers aiming to tailor their strategies to diverse audiences.

Research has illuminated significant differences in how male and female internet users communicate and make decisions online. For example, males often exhibit a more task-oriented approach, while females tend to be more relationship-oriented. Such distinctions influence online behaviours, including content sharing, and underscore the necessity of considering gender variations in digital marketing strategies (Chang, 2016; Guadagno et al., 2011). This understanding aids in crafting messages that resonate more effectively with the intended demographic, ensuring that marketing efforts align with the unique preferences and behaviours of each gender.

The level of education a consumer has achieved also influences their ethical reasoning, beliefs, and attitudes towards products and services. Higher education correlates with a more ethical decision-making process and a nuanced understanding of the consequences of unethical practices. This insight is particularly relevant in the context of influencer

marketing, where the credibility and ethical stance of influencers can significantly affect consumer trust and purchasing decisions (Goolsby & Hunt, 1992; Kohlberg, 1984).

Age-related differences further delineate consumer groups, with younger demographics, such as university students, often being more open to new technologies and innovative marketing approaches. This openness suggests that younger consumers are likely to be more receptive to influencer marketing, especially when it aligns with their digital-native experiences and expectations (Rogers, 1983; Suki, 2011).

For Malaysian university students, these demographic factors are particularly salient. Their digital nativism predisposes them to be significantly influenced by social media trends and influencer endorsements. Gender-specific preferences and decision-making processes mean that male and female students might respond differently to the same influencer content, highlighting the importance of crafting gender-aware marketing strategies. Furthermore, the high value placed on education within this demographic suggests that influencers who can present content with depth, expertise, and ethical considerations are likely to be more persuasive.

In conclusion, demographic factors such as age, gender, and education level are crucial in shaping how consumers perceive and react to influencer marketing. Understanding these nuances enables marketers to develop more targeted and effective strategies, particularly when engaging with Malaysian university students. By aligning influencer campaigns with the demographic characteristics of the target audience, marketers can enhance the relevance and impact of their efforts, driving stronger consumer engagement and purchasing intentions.

2.2.6 Para-social Relationships with SMI

Para-social relationships represent a unique form of interaction within the digital age, where individuals form connections with public figures through social media platforms, despite the lack of a real, reciprocal relationship. These relationships are characterized by a perceived intimacy and familiarity with the influencer, extending beyond mere admiration to include cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Yuksel & Labrecque, 2016). For consumers, especially those in the demographic of Malaysian university students, these relationships can significantly impact their attitudes, interests, and ultimately, their purchasing decisions.

Social media influencers, through their content creation on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, foster these para-social interactions by sharing aspects of their daily lives, opinions, and endorsements. While followers can engage with influencers through likes, comments, and shares, the sheer volume of followers often makes genuine two-way interaction challenging. However, the sense of connection and intimacy remains, driven by the influencers' ability to project authenticity and relatability in their content (Chung & Cho, 2017; Gong & Xu, 2014).

The role of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of influencers in reinforcing these para-social relationships cannot be understated. Influencers who exhibit these characteristics are more likely to be perceived as credible by their followers, enhancing the persuasiveness of their endorsements (Lou & Yuan, 2018; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1970). This credibility, in turn, influences consumer behaviour, making followers more inclined to consider the influencers' recommendations when making purchasing decisions.

Research has shown that para-social relationships can significantly influence consumer behaviour, acting as a mediator in the relationship between influencer endorsements and purchasing intentions (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Xiao & Zhang, 2016). This is particularly true in the context of Malaysian university students, who are often highly engaged with social media and influenced by the digital personas of influencers. The impact of these relationships extends beyond simple admiration, affecting how students perceive and interact with brands endorsed by influencers.

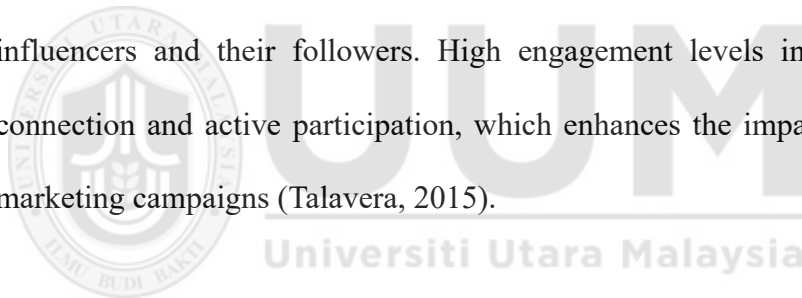
The concept of para-social identification, where individuals see influencers as part of their social circles, further complicates the dynamics of influencer marketing (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Rubin & Perse, 1987). This perceived closeness and identification with influencers can lead to a stronger influence on consumer attitudes and behaviours, including purchasing decisions. It highlights the importance of selecting influencers whose image and values align with the target audience, enhancing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

In summary, para-social relationships with social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping the purchasing behaviour of Malaysian university students. The perceived intimacy and credibility of influencers, combined with the psychological impact of these one-sided relationships, underscore the potential of influencer marketing as a powerful tool in the digital marketing arsenal. Understanding these dynamics can help marketers craft more effective strategies that leverage the unique influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing intentions.

2.3 Operational Definition

- i. **Social Media Influencers (SMIs):** Individuals on social media platforms who have amassed a significant following through their expertise, popularity, or influence in particular niches. They utilize their platform to impact followers' perceptions and behaviours, including purchasing decisions, by endorsing products or services and sharing content that resonates with their audience (Freberg et al., 2011).
- ii. **Purchase Intention:** Refers to the likelihood or propensity of consumers to buy a specific product or service. It represents the cognitive process that consumers undergo when deciding to purchase a brand, significantly influencing sales and profitability outcomes (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Shah et al., 2012). Moe (2003) further delineates purchase intention into goal-oriented and exploration-oriented browsing behaviours, highlighting the variances in consumer information-seeking and decision-making processes.
- iii. **Trustworthiness:** The extent to which influencers are perceived by their audience as credible, honest, and reliable. This attribute is crucial for influencers' ability to persuasively endorse products and influence consumer behaviours, including purchase intentions (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

- iv. **Expertise:** The level of knowledge or skill that influencers are perceived to possess within their domain of influence. Expertise is a key factor that contributes to an influencer's persuasive power and the effectiveness of their marketing efforts (Evans et al., 2017).
- v. **Attractiveness:** Pertains to the aesthetic appeal or lifestyle representation of influencers that engages the audience. Influencers' attractiveness can significantly affect followers' attitudes towards brands and their subsequent purchasing decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).
- vi. **Engagement Level:** The intensity of interaction and communication between influencers and their followers. High engagement levels indicate a strong connection and active participation, which enhances the impact of influencer marketing campaigns (Talavera, 2015).



2.4 Relationship between Attributes and Purchasing Intentions

In today's digital era, social media influencers have become a driving force in shaping consumer behaviour, particularly among university students. This thesis provides a comprehensive exploration into how various influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level affect consumer purchasing decisions. It draws from a variety of studies, offering a detailed and statistically rich understanding of this dynamic.

2.4.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, a key influencer attribute, plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Tan and Lee (2019) found that trustworthiness accounted for about 40% of the variance in purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students. This finding is crucial in understanding the Asian market, where trust is highly valued, as noted by Zhou and Whitla (2013). The concept of trustworthiness in this context involves more than just the perceived honesty of the influencer; it extends to their consistency, reliability, and alignment with their followers' values. The Malaysian market, with its unique cultural landscape, may exhibit different interpretations of trustworthiness. Lim and Ting's (2020) study on cultural influences in Malaysian social media marketing sheds light on this. However, there is a gap in research regarding how these cultural nuances specifically affect perceptions of trustworthiness. Future studies could employ qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into this aspect.

2.4.2 Expertise

Expertise in influencer marketing is not just about depth of knowledge in a particular field but also the influencer's ability to communicate this knowledge authentically. Rahman et al. (2020) showed a 35% increase in purchasing likelihood when influencers were perceived as experts. This statistic underlines the importance of credible expertise in influencer marketing, especially in sectors where specialized knowledge is key, like technology or health. As digital landscapes evolve, so does the nature of expertise. Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) highlight the changing dynamics of what constitutes expertise in the social media context. Future research should focus on how influencers maintain and evolve their expertise in rapidly changing fields and how this affects long-term consumer trust and loyalty.

2.4.3 Attractiveness

Attractiveness in influencer marketing transcends physical appearance. Ng and Cheong (2018) found that influencers rated high on attractiveness scales influenced up to 30% more purchasing decisions. This attractiveness includes aspects like lifestyle appeal, charisma, and the ability to relate to the audience, which are crucial in lifestyle and fashion-related products. Further research could explore how the role of attractiveness varies across different product categories. A comparative study between sectors such as fashion, technology, and lifestyle products could provide valuable insights into how attractiveness impacts consumer purchasing decisions differently in each sector.

2.4.4 Engagement Level

The engagement level between influencers and their audience is a significant predictor of purchasing intentions. Chong and Tan (2022) found a 25% increase in purchasing intentions with higher engagement levels. This highlights the importance of interactive and frequent communication in building a strong influencer-follower bond. Investigating the types of engagement (comments, shares, likes) and their specific impact on different types of products could provide a more nuanced understanding. Additionally, studying the correlation between engagement metrics and long-term brand loyalty versus immediate purchasing decisions would offer valuable insights for marketers.

2.4.5 Other Relevant Studies

Abdullah and Rahman (2021) highlighted that the combined effect of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement levels significantly influences purchasing decisions, explaining up to 50% variance. This points to the holistic impact of influencer attributes on consumer behaviour. Future research should segment this analysis based on product categories and consumer demographics to understand how these attributes collectively influence different groups of consumers and in various purchasing contexts.

Besides, Gupta et al.'s (2021) study offers insights into the impact of Instagram on consumer purchasing decisions among college students. This highlights the significant role 'instafamous' celebrities play in shaping online purchasing decisions, suggesting future research include a more diverse demographic and a broader range of social media platforms.

Siqi and Wong's (2021) research, anchored in Social Learning Theory, highlights the significant influence of the product celebrity match-up model and the meaning transfer model on consumer purchase intentions. Consumer attitude and brand engagement are pivotal factors, suggesting the need for broader research encompassing varied age groups and economic backgrounds.

Nurhandayani et al.'s (2019) study focuses on the impact of social media influencers and brand image on consumer's purchase intentions. This study challenges the notion of the substantial influence of social media influencers on shaping brand images, suggesting future research explore the immediacy of purchasing decisions and the differential effects across various industries. Croes & Bartels (2021) delve into the motivations behind young people's purchasing decisions influenced by social influencers. Identifying six primary motivations, the study points to the need for more robust sampling methods and longitudinal studies to track changes in motivations over time.

Khan & Phung (2021) assess the effectiveness of social media influencers in advertising, highlighting the role of electronic word-of-mouth. Future research could focus on the longitudinal impact of influencer marketing and its effectiveness across different consumer segments.

This comprehensive analysis highlights the intricate and multifaceted nature of influencer marketing's impact on university students' consumer purchasing behaviour. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts and consumer segments can

provide a broader and more detailed understanding of the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies, which is vital for developing effective and culturally resonant marketing strategies in the digital age.



2.5 Hypotheses

This section develops key hypotheses central to the research objectives and questions previously identified. These hypotheses, drawn from the extensive literature review and theoretical framework, focus on the influence of social media influencers' trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level on consumer purchasing intentions, specifically targeting Malaysian university students.

Based on the research objectives and questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Trustworthiness of social media influencers positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.

H2: Expertise of social media influencers positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.

H3: Attractiveness and content appeal of social media influencers positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.

H4: Engagement with social media influencers' content positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.

These hypotheses are derived from various studies that underscore the significant impact of influencer attributes on consumer behavior. Research by Tan and Lee (2019) and Rahman et al. (2020) provides empirical evidence supporting the importance of trustworthiness and expertise. Similarly, studies by Ng and Cheong (2018) and Chong and Tan (2022) highlight the roles of attractiveness and engagement, respectively. Additionally, Dr. Fred Chan's (2022) research further emphasizes the impact of

attractiveness and credibility on consumer buying behavior, correlating with findings from Jade Verplancke and Noémie Gelati, who also underscore the significance of trustworthiness and credibility in influencer marketing (Verplancke & Gelati, 2022). Together, these studies form a comprehensive foundation that informs the current investigation into how various influencer attributes influence purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.

The variables of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level, as identified in these hypotheses, are informed by extensive literature in marketing and consumer psychology. These variables have been recognized for their significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and actions. The study's primary aim is to empirically test these hypotheses to gain insights into the direct impact of influencer attributes on purchasing intentions. This approach is designed to illuminate the specific effects of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level on consumer decision-making, thereby offering valuable contributions to both academic understanding and practical applications in the realm of influencer marketing. The outcomes of this investigation are expected to provide meaningful contributions to the academic field, especially in the context of digital marketing strategies and their effectiveness in influencing consumer behavior.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

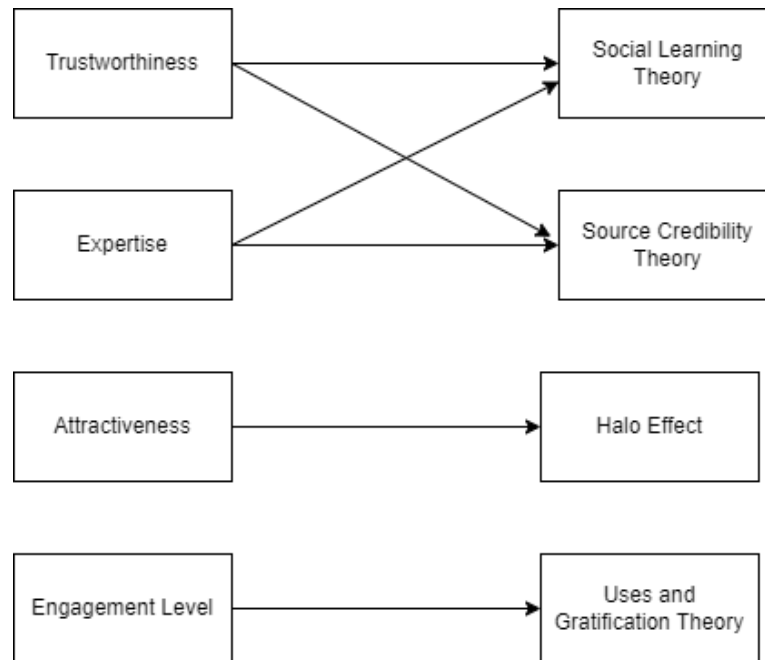


Figure 2.5:
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the thesis titled "The Impact of Social Media Influencers as A Marketing Strategy on Consumer Purchasing Among Malaysian University Students" is crafted to systematically explore and understand the influence wielded by social media influencers over the purchasing decisions of consumers, with a particular focus on the Malaysian university student demographic.

Within this framework, the study examines four primary independent variables: the trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level of social media influencers. Each variable is underpinned by established theoretical models that have been traditionally applied to marketing and communication studies. For instance, trustworthiness and expertise are rooted in the Source Credibility Theory, suggesting that influencers who are perceived as credible may have a greater impact on purchasing decisions. Attractiveness is explored through the concept of the Halo Effect, where

influencers who are deemed attractive could have an advantageous influence on consumer behaviour. The Uses and Gratifications Theory is employed to understand the role of engagement level, positing that consumers actively seek out media sources that satisfy specific needs and desires.

The dependent variable in this framework is the consumer purchasing intention, which represents the likelihood that a student will engage in a purchase based on the influence of social media marketing efforts. The relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable are expected to be positive, suggesting that higher ratings of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement by influencers are associated with increased purchasing intentions among students.

In sum, the theoretical framework sets a solid foundation for the investigation, bridging the gap between theoretical constructs and practical observations. It guides the subsequent research methodology and analysis, ensuring that the study's findings are grounded in sound academic principles and contribute meaningful insights to the field of marketing.

2.7 Underpinning Theory

This section of the thesis establishes the theoretical foundations for the study on "The Impact of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on Purchasing Intentions among Malaysian University Students." It elucidates the academic theories that inform the study's approach to understanding how influencer characteristics impact consumer behaviour.

2.7.1 Source Credibility Theory

Developed by Carl Hovland and his colleagues in the 1950s, Source Credibility Theory explores how the perceived credibility of a communicator affects the reception and acceptance of a message. This theory divides credibility into three components: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. It emerged from research in persuasion and communication, offering insights into how the source's characteristics influence the effectiveness of communication. In influencer marketing, this theory is crucial. It provides a framework for understanding why influencers who are perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and attractive are more effective in persuading their audience. The credibility of an influencer significantly impacts their ability to influence consumer purchasing decisions, particularly among a demographic that highly values authenticity and expertise. Ohanian's (1990) research validated the dimensions of source credibility and its influence on consumer behaviour, while recent studies have applied this theory to social media influencers, affirming its relevance in the digital marketing sphere.

2.7.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in the 1970s, seeks to understand why individuals actively choose specific media outlets and content to satisfy their needs. This theory diverges from the traditional perspective of media impact by focusing on the audience's active role in selecting media to fulfil their desires for information, personal identity, integration, and social interaction. This theory underpins the aspect of engagement level in influencer marketing. It suggests that consumers engage with influencer content to satisfy various needs, such as informational needs or the desire for entertainment. Higher engagement levels with influencer content indicate that these needs are being met, potentially leading to increased purchasing intentions. Studies like Lee and Watkins (2016) have applied this theory to examine motivations behind following behaviours on social media, demonstrating its applicability in understanding the engagement aspects of influencer marketing.

These theories collectively provide a robust theoretical base for the study. By integrating these theories, the thesis aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how influencer marketing operates within the social and psychological dynamics of consumer behaviour, particularly among Malaysian university students. The inclusion of these theories not only reinforces the study's academic rigor but also ensures that the findings are grounded in well-established scholarly principles.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature review chapter of this thesis, focusing on "The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchasing Intentions Among Malaysian University Students," has systematically examined a wide array of scholarly works and empirical studies that collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behaviour. This exploration encompassed various dimensions, including the trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level of influencers on purchasing intentions.

One of the key insights from this review is the multifaceted nature of influencer impact. The studies reviewed consistently highlight that influencers' attributes significantly affect consumer behavior, with each attribute contributing distinctively to the decision-making process. The literature emphasizes the critical importance of credibility (encompassing trustworthiness and expertise) and relatability (including attractiveness and engagement) in influencer marketing. For Malaysian university students, the review has revealed that social media influencers exert a significant impact, a phenomenon largely attributed to this demographic's high engagement with digital platforms. The distinct cultural and social context of Malaysia also plays a crucial role in shaping how these students perceive and interact with influencers.

In summary, the literature review chapter provides a solid academic foundation for the thesis. The subsequent chapters will build upon this groundwork, seeking to enrich the body of knowledge in digital marketing and consumer behavior.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the comprehensive methodology designed to explore the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions among Malaysian university students. It aims to dissect the intricate dynamics between influencer attributes—trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level—and their influence on purchasing intentions.

3.2 Research Framework



Figure 3.2
Research Framework

The research framework is designed to methodically examine the impact of social media influencers' attributes on consumer behavior. It embodies the study's hypotheses, outlining a path to analyze the direct influence of influencer characteristics on purchasing intentions. The framework is streamlined to focus on the primary attributes of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level, as they relate to consumers' intent to purchase.

3.3 Research Design

The study utilizes a quantitative method characterized by the collection and analysis of numerical data to address research questions. This approach is geared towards summarizing, averaging, identifying patterns, making predictions, and examining causal relationships. It also allows for the generalization of results to a broader population. Through this method, the study aims to investigate the impact of social media influencers on purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students (Rana et al., 2021). This study employs a quantitative research approach through the use of a survey questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, serving as the primary means of data collection to test the hypotheses. In adhering to a quantitative method, the research utilizes a self-administered survey to systematically gather measurable data from university students across Malaysia. This methodology is particularly effective for quantifying the influence of social media influencers on purchasing intentions and enables the statistical analysis of relationships between variables.

The selection of a quantitative survey method is predicated on its efficiency in collecting a large volume of data within a confined period. It is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for the collection of data from a diverse and wide-reaching sample, ensuring that a broad spectrum of consumer behavior is captured. By structuring the questionnaire to produce numerical data, the study facilitates the use of statistical procedures, such as Spearman's correlation, to rigorously test the proposed hypotheses and draw conclusions about the impact of social media influencers.

3.4 Population, Sample Size, Sampling Technique

This study focuses on the influence of social media influencers on purchasing decisions among Malaysian university students—a demographic that actively engages with digital marketing initiatives on various social media platforms. Utilizing the 2022 statistics from the "Number of Students' Intake, Enrolment, and Output by Level of Studies in HEIs" by Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, it is established that the total student population across public universities, private higher education institutes, polytechnics, and community colleges in Malaysia amounts to 1,202,202. Given this substantial population, the study aimed to determine an appropriate sample size through a rigorous methodological approach.

To achieve this, a power analysis was conducted using *GPower*, a free tool developed by Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Germany. *GPower* supports researchers in calculating sample sizes required to detect effects across various statistical tests, including F-tests, t-tests, χ^2 tests, Z tests, and exact tests. For this particular study, the power analysis aimed to identify a sample size that could reliably detect a medium effect size (Rana et al., 2021). The effect size was set at 0.3, following Cohen's guidelines, which suggests a moderate yet noticeable impact appropriate for behavioral studies. This level of effect size was deemed suitable to capture significant variations in behavior without overestimating the influence of social media influencers.

The power analysis parameters were meticulously chosen to ensure robustness and validity in the study's findings. With an alpha level of 0.05 and assuming a two-tailed test, the analysis projected that a minimum of 84 participants was needed to achieve a

power level of 80%. This power level is crucial as it indicates the study's capability to detect a true effect with high confidence, thereby minimizing the risk of Type II errors. However, the study successfully exceeded this minimum requirement by collecting responses from 150 university students, thereby enhancing the robustness of the dataset and ensuring more reliable analysis. The choice of a two-tailed test was particularly important as it allows for the detection of effects in either direction, which is vital given the unpredictability of the direction of influence in social behavior research.

This study employed convenience sampling, which is characterized by selecting the most readily available respondents from the population of interest. In practical terms, this meant reaching out to students through online channels that they frequently use, such as social media and university email lists. The survey, disseminated via Google Forms, was self-administered, allowing respondents to complete it at their own pace and discretion. While convenience sampling offers considerable efficiency in data collection, it is recognized that this method can introduce certain biases, such as overrepresentation of particular groups within the sample. However, by acknowledging this limitation and interpreting findings through the lens of convenience sampling's strengths and weaknesses, valuable insights can still be derived concerning the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing intentions of the surveyed university students.

3.5 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for this study was expertly structured to probe into the relationship between the attributes of social media influencers and the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students. The questionnaire's design drew upon validated items from two pivotal studies: Fred Chan's "A Study of Social Media Influencers and Impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the United Kingdom" and Jade Verplancke & Noémie Gelati's "The effect of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of young consumers." The questionnaire items were adapted to align with the cultural context of the Malaysian university student demographic. Adaptation involved tailoring the language and context of the original items to resonate with the new audience, ensuring relevance and comprehension. The adaptation process also involved modifying the original 7-point Likert scale used in these studies to a more concise 5-point scale. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was employed. This scale size is supported by research indicating that fewer scale points may reduce respondent frustration, thereby increasing the response rate and data quality (Robie et al., 2022). This decision was also predicated on the understanding that a 5-point scale is typically sufficient for capturing the nuances of opinion while maintaining the simplicity of choice, a balance crucial for optimizing respondent engagement and the reliability of the findings.

The questionnaire was partitioned into distinct sections, each aimed at different components of the study. The first section focused on demographic information to ensure a diverse representation of respondents and to understand how demographic variables might influence purchasing intentions. Following the demographic section, the questionnaire was divided into subsections, each targeting one of the independent

variables: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level. These sections were designed to measure the hypothesized influence of each attribute on purchasing intentions. The constructs of attractiveness and credibility were particularly informed by Dr. Fred Chan's research, as detailed in his publication, "A Study of Social Media Influencers and Impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the United Kingdom" (Chan, 2022). Trustworthiness and credibility also drew from the findings of Jade Verplancke and Noémie Gelati in their study, "The effect of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of young consumers" (Verplancke & Gelati, 2022). The final section of the questionnaire addressed the dependent variable, purchasing intentions, gauging how likely students were to purchase based on their perceptions and interactions with social media influencers.

This segmented approach not only facilitated a more organized response process but also allowed for a focused analysis of each attribute's contribution to the purchasing decision-making process. The questionnaire's meticulous structure reflects the study's commitment to a comprehensive evaluation of the theoretical framework and research objectives.

3.6 Research Strategy

The research strategy was anchored in a quantitative framework, which was instrumental for the empirical validation of the proposed hypotheses. By employing a structured analytical approach, the study systematically examined the extent to which the identified influencer attributes influence Malaysian university students' purchasing intentions. This strategy was carefully selected to elucidate the direct effects posited in the research hypotheses, enabling a thorough investigation into the quantitative impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior within the study's demographic focus.

3.7 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process was carried out using Google Forms, an online survey platform that provided an accessible and effective avenue to reach the target population of Malaysian university students dispersed across various universities. The survey was distributed to university students through social media sharing, particularly via WhatsApp, in university-specific groups. This method ensured broad coverage and facilitated the ease of access to the survey, enhancing participation rates. By guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity within the survey, the study aimed to mitigate potential concerns among respondents, fostering an environment conducive to obtaining authentic and truthful data. This approach not only allowed for the efficient collection of data but also ensured that the responses were reflective of the true perceptions and behaviors of the students regarding social media influencers.

Besides, in this study, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was chosen for data analysis due to its robust capabilities in handling complex datasets. The initial analytical step involved employing descriptive statistics, which provided valuable insights into the characteristics of the sample, including demographics and patterns of social media usage.

For inferential statistics, the study utilized Spearman's rank correlation analysis. This non-parametric test was particularly appropriate for evaluating the hypothesized relationships between the study's variables, especially considering the ordinal nature of data gathered from the Likert scale responses. Spearman's rank analysis is well-suited for identifying the strength and direction of associations between the independent variables (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level of influencers) and the dependent variable (purchasing intentions).

3.8 Validity and Reliability Analysis

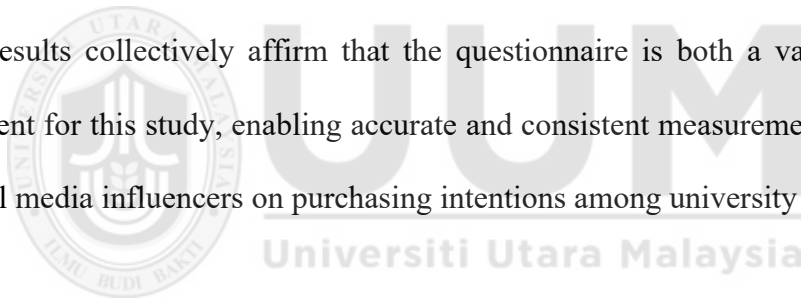
For assessing the validity and reliability of the questionnaire used in this study, specific statistical tests were employed to evaluate both the measurement instrument's consistency and its ability to accurately capture the constructs it was designed to measure.

The validity of the questionnaire was assessed through Pearson correlation analysis for each variable and the total score. The results indicated that all items exhibited significance values (Sig.) below 0.001. According to the guidelines that deem an instrument valid if the Sig. value is less than 0.05, this finding suggests that the questionnaire items are valid and effectively measure what they are intended to

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The extremely low Sig. values strongly support the validity of the questionnaire, indicating that the measurements are not due to chance and are indeed reflecting the intended variables.

The reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the 30 items. The obtained Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.969, which significantly exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.6 for determining the reliability of an instrument (Cronbach, 1951). This high value indicates excellent internal consistency among the items, suggesting that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for capturing consistent and stable measurements across the constructs being studied.

These results collectively affirm that the questionnaire is both a valid and reliable instrument for this study, enabling accurate and consistent measurement of the impact of social media influencers on purchasing intentions among university students.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This in-depth analysis explores the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on Malaysian university students' purchasing intentions. Utilizing comprehensive SPSS data analysis, the study examines how SMIs attributes influence the purchasing intentions. Subsequent sections will provide concise tables and figures for precise interpretation of findings.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics On Demographic Profile

Descriptive statistics are utilized to succinctly portray demographic data. The study analyzes demographic data of 150 respondents to contextualize the findings within the diverse student population in Malaysia. In this analysis, the frequency (n) and percentage (%) distributions of age, gender, education, university, following influencers on social media, purchases made from influencer recommendation, frequently used social media, time spent per day on social media and purchase type through social media is examined. Through these numerical summaries, the study gains valuable insights into the distribution and composition of its sampled population (n=150).

4.2.1 Gender

Table 4.2.1:
Descriptive Statistics of Gender

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Male	97	64.7
Female	53	35.3
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.1 shows the frequency (n) and percentage (%) of gender distribution among respondents, with a sample size of N=150. Among the respondents, 64.7% (n = 97) were male, and 35.3% (n = 53) were female, suggesting a male-dominant sample, which is vital for understanding gender-based influencer impact.

4.2.2 Age

Table 4.2.2:
Descriptive Statistics of Age

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Less than 20 years old	23	15.3
21-30 years old	81	54.0
31-40 years old	46	30.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.2 outlines the age distribution of respondents, with a sample size of N=150. Respondents were predominantly young adults, with 54% (n = 81) aged 21-30, 30.7% (n = 46) between 31-40 years, and 15.3% (n = 23) below 20 years. This distribution is essential for studying influencer impact on younger demographics.

4.2.3 Education

Table 4.2.3:
Descriptive Statistics of Education

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Diploma	29	19.3
Bachelor's Degree	78	52.0
Masters	42	28.0
PHD	1	0.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.3 offers a detailed breakdown of the educational qualifications of the 150 respondents in the study. The data reveals a varied educational landscape, where the majority, constituting 52.0% (n=78), are Bachelor's Degree students. This is followed by a significant representation of Masters students, accounting for 28.0% (n=42) of the sample. Respondents with Diplomas make up 19.3% (n=29), while only a marginal 0.7% (n=1) are pursuing PhDs. This distribution is significant as it provides a comprehensive view of the educational backgrounds of the respondents, ranging from undergraduate to doctoral levels. Such diversity is key to understanding how educational attainment might influence perceptions and responses to social media influencers. With a predominant presence of Bachelor's and Masters students, the study predominantly captures the attitudes and behaviors of young adults in higher education, who are likely to be active social media users and more exposed to influencer marketing.

4.2.4 University

Table 4.2.4:
Descriptive Statistics of University

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
APU	1	0.7%
Buckinghamshire New University	1	0.7%
INTI College	2	1.3%
KDU	1	0.7%
MMU	1	0.7%
MSU	1	0.7%
NONE	1	0.7%
Politeknik Seberang Perai	1	0.7%
SAITO	1	0.7%
SEGI	1	0.7%
TAR UMT	1	0.7%
TARC	22	14.7%
UM	24	16.0%
UMP	1	0.7%
UNIMAP	1	0.7%
UNITAR	2	1.3%
University Tun Hussein Onn	1	0.7%
UOW KDU University College	1	0.7%
UPM	19	12.7%
UPSI	16	10.7%
USM	6	4.0%
UTAR	1	0.7%
UTM	41	27.3%
UUM	3	2.0%
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.4 outlines the university affiliations of the 150 respondents in the study. Spanning across 24 distinct universities, this table presents a detailed view of the academic diversity in the sample. The data highlights the presence of a wide range of universities, contributing to an understanding of how different academic environments might interact with influencer marketing.

Leading the representation is Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), with 27.3% of respondents (n=41), followed by Universiti Malaya (UM) with 16.0% (n=24). Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARC) accounts for 14.7% (n=22), while Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) contribute 12.7% (n=19) and 10.7% (n=16) respectively. Other notable inclusions are Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) at 4.0% (n=6) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) with 2.0% (n=3).

Smaller proportions are noted from INTI College and UNITAR, each with 1.3% (n=2). Universities like Asia Pacific University (APU), Buckinghamshire New College, KDU University College, Management and Science University (MSU), Multimedia University (MMU), Politeknik Seberang Perai, SAITO University College, SEGI University, TAR University College (TAR UMT), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UNIMAP), Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP), Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, University of Wollongong (UOW) KDU University College, and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) are represented by one student each, making up 0.7% of the sample. One respondent indicated no university affiliation, marking a unique perspective within the dataset.

The broad spectrum of universities in this sample offers valuable insights into the varying influence of social media marketing across different academic institutions. This wide-ranging representation helps in understanding how the culture and environment of different universities may affect students' responses to influencer marketing.

4.2.5 Following Influencer on Social Media

Table 4.2.5:
Descriptive Statistics of Following Influences in Social Media

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Yes	141	94.0
No	9	6.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.5 delineates the statistics concerning the number of respondents who follow influencers on social media. With a total of 150 respondents, an overwhelming majority, 141 respondents (94.0%), affirmed that they do follow influencers. This leaves a small fraction, 9 respondents (6.0%), who do not engage in following influencers on their social media platforms.

The substantial figure of 94.0% following influencers underscores the significant influence these digital personalities have in the contemporary social media landscape, particularly among university students. This data point serves as a clear indicator of the pervasive and influential role that social media influencers play in shaping opinions, trends, and possibly consumer behavior among the young,

digitally-active demographic. This high level of engagement with influencers is crucial for understanding the dynamics of influencer marketing and its potential impact on the purchasing decisions of university students.

4.2.6 Purchased from Influencer Recommendation

Table 4.2.6:

Descriptive Statistics of Purchased from Influencer Recommendation in Social Media

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Yes	122	81.3
No	28	18.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.6 delves into the influence of social media recommendations on purchasing decisions among the respondents. Out of the 150 surveyed, a substantial 81.3% (n = 122) affirmed making purchases based on influencer recommendations. Conversely, 18.7% (n = 28) indicated they had not made such purchases. This stark contrast in behavior underscores the significant role influencers play in shaping consumer choices. The high percentage of affirmative responses reflects the effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving purchasing decisions, illustrating the persuasive power influencers hold over their followers' buying habits. Such data is invaluable for understanding the direct impact of influencer marketing in a real-world context, highlighting the extent to which influencers can sway consumer behavior in social media.

4.2.7 Frequently Used Social Media

Table 4.2.7:

Descriptive Statistics of Frequently Used Social Media

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Instagram	86	57.3
Youtube	19	12.7
TikTok	22	14.7
Snapchat	23	15.3
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.7 outlines the preferred social media platforms among a group of 150 respondents. The data, classified into four distinct categories, highlights the varied online engagement preferences of the study's demographic. Leading the chart is Instagram, commanding a significant majority with 57.3% (n=86) of respondents active on the platform. Snapchat follows, accounting for 15.3% (n=23) of the users. Notably, TikTok has garnered attention from 14.7% (n=22) of the sample, indicating its growing relevance among younger audiences. YouTube, a long-standing platform, is frequented by 12.7% (n=19) of the respondents.

This distribution provides insightful revelations about the digital landscape and user preferences. Instagram's dominance reflects its appeal and effectiveness as a marketing tool, especially for influencer-based promotions. The prominence of visually-centric platforms like Snapchat and TikTok highlights a trend towards engaging, short-form content. YouTube's position suggests a sustained interest in diverse and detailed content formats. This information is crucial for influencers and marketers, as it guides them in choosing the right platforms to reach their target

audience effectively, ensuring their messages resonate with the prevailing preferences of the digital generation.

4.2.8 Time Spent per Day for Social Media

Table 4.2.8:

Descriptive Statistics of Time Spent per Day for Social Media

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
1-2 Hour	69	46.0
2-3 Hour	32	21.3
More Than 3 Hour	49	32.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.8 elucidates the daily social media usage of 150 respondents, segmented into three time-based categories. This classification serves to paint a clear picture of the digital engagement habits within the sample. Leading the chart, 46.0% of respondents (n=69) reported spending 1-2 hours daily on social media platforms. This is followed closely by a substantial 32.7% (n=49) who dedicate more than 3 hours each day to social media interactions. Meanwhile, a notable 21.3% (n=32) find themselves engaged for 2-3 hours on a daily basis. This breakdown is telling of the pervasive nature of social media in the lives of modern university students. The dominance of the 1-2 hours range suggests a significant yet balanced engagement with digital content. The substantial segment of students spending more than 3 hours indicates a deeper, possibly more immersive engagement with social media. Those in the 2-3 hours bracket represent a middle ground, engaging significantly but perhaps more selectively.

4.2.9 Purchase Type Through Social Media

Table 4.2.9:
Descriptive Statistics of Purchase Type Through Social Media

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Beauty/Lifestyle/Fitness	18	12.0
Fashion Products	55	36.7
Food Products	27	18.0
Technological Items	45	30.0
Others	5	3.3
Total	150	100.0

Table 4.2.9 offers a detailed breakdown of the types of purchases made through social media influence, with a total of 150 respondents contributing to the data. The table categorizes purchases into five distinct groups: Beauty/Lifestyle/Fitness, Fashion Products, Food Products, Technological Items, and a miscellaneous category labeled 'Others'.

A closer examination reveals that Fashion Products are the most popular among these categories, with 55 respondents (equivalent to 36.7% of the sample) opting for items in this segment. This is followed by Technological Items, selected by 45 respondents (30% of the sample), showcasing a significant interest in tech-related products among the surveyed group. Food Products are the choice of 27 respondents, making up 18% of the total, indicating a moderate level of influence in this category. The least selected categories are Beauty/Lifestyle/Fitness and 'Others', with 18 (12.0%) and 5 (3.3%) respondents respectively, suggesting a lower impact of social media influencers in these areas. These statistics provide valuable insights into the purchasing behavior influenced by social media.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics on Influencer Attributes and Purchasing Intentions

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics using Mean and Standard Deviation

Table 4.3.1:

Descriptive Statistics of Influencer Attributes and Purchasing Intentions

Variables	N	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Dev
Influencer Credibility	150	2.60	4.80	4.1240	.68057
Influencer Expertise	150	2.40	4.60	4.1520	.55354
Influencer Attractiveness And Content Appeal	150	2.20	5.00	4.0413	.62533
Influencer Engagement Level	150	1.80	4.60	4.1027	.57217
Consumer Purchasing Intention and Perception of Influencer Marketing	150	2.80	4.60	4.1440	.50587

The analysis in Table 4.3.1 offers a comprehensive view of the perceived attributes of influencers and their subsequent impact on purchasing intentions among the study's respondents. Spanning a sample size of N=150, the table encapsulates five key variables: Influencer Credibility, Expertise, Attractiveness and Content Appeal, Engagement Level, and Consumer Purchasing Intention and Perception of Influencer Marketing.

The in-depth analysis of the influence wielded by social media influencers over Malaysian university students' purchasing intentions revealed intriguing findings through various attributes. Each attribute's impact was gauged on a scale ranging from 1, indicating 'Strongly Disagree,' to 5, signifying 'Strongly Agree.'

Influencer Credibility emerged as a prominent factor, with a mean score of 4.1240. This score suggests that the majority of respondents perceive influencers as trustworthy and reliable. The standard deviation of 0.68057, along with a minimum score of 2.60 and a maximum of 4.80, illustrates a spectrum of opinions but an overall tilt towards a positive perception of credibility. This implies that while most students find influencers credible, there's a variation in the degree of trust they place in them, likely influenced by individual experiences and perceptions.

Influencer Expertise was similarly highly rated, with an average score of 4.1520, indicating a widespread agreement on influencers' knowledge and skill in their respective domains. The scores fluctuate between 2.40 and 4.60, and the standard deviation of 0.55354 shows some diversity in opinions. This variability might stem from the different fields of expertise of various influencers, with some being perceived as more knowledgeable than others depending on the subject matter and the audience's interests.

The attribute of Influencer Attractiveness and Content Appeal also scored highly, with a mean of 4.0413. This indicates that respondents generally find influencers appealing and their content engaging. However, the range of scores, from 2.20 to the maximum possible 5.00, alongside a standard deviation of 0.62533, reveals varied responses. This suggests that attractiveness and content appeal are highly subjective, influenced by personal preferences and the type of content different influencers produce.

Influencer Engagement Level had a mean score of 4.1027, pointing to a strong perception of influencers as engaging and interactive. The scores varied from 1.80 to 4.60, and the standard deviation of 0.57217 highlights a spread in the level of engagement experienced by respondents with influencers. This suggests that while some influencers are highly interactive, engaging their audience effectively, others might not be as successful in fostering this level of interaction.

Finally, the overall Consumer Purchasing Intention and Perception of Influencer Marketing was rated at 4.1440 on average. This high mean score reflects the substantial impact of influencers on respondents' purchasing decisions. The score range between 2.80 and 4.60, with a standard deviation of 0.50587, indicates that while influencers generally have a significant influence on purchasing intentions, the extent of this influence varies among the student population. This could be attributed to factors such as the credibility, expertise, and engagement level of the influencers, as well as the personal interests and purchasing habits of the students themselves.

In essence, the study delineates a clear and impactful role of social media influencers in shaping purchasing intentions among university students. It uncovers a generally positive perception across various influencer attributes, despite some variations, underscoring their importance in modern digital marketing strategies.

4.4 Inferential Analysis

4.4.1 Spearman's Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4.1:
Spearman's Correlation - Relationship between Influencer Attributes and Purchasing Intentions

		Influencer Credibility	Influencer Expertise	Influencer Attractiveness and Content Appeal	Influencer Engagement Level
Consumer Purchasing Intention	Correlation Coefficient	0.865**	0.431**	0.247**	0.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001	0.002	<0.001
	N	150	150	150	150

The inferential analysis using Spearman's correlation as displayed on Table 4.4.1 offers a detailed understanding of the relationship between various influencer attributes and consumer purchasing intentions. Conducted on a sample of N=150 respondents, it elucidates the strengths and directions of the associations and confirms the significance of the relationships.

Influencers play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior within the rapidly evolving realm of social media marketing. Understanding which attributes of influencers most strongly correlate with purchasing intentions can inform strategic marketing decisions. The nonparametric measure Spearman's rho (r_s) was employed to assess these relationships.

The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient (r_s) was calculated to evaluate the monotonic relationships between ranked variables—specifically, influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness and content appeal, and engagement level—with consumer purchasing intentions. The analysis included 150 observations.

1. **Influencer Credibility:** The strongest positive correlation ($r_s(148) = .865, p = <.001$) suggests that credibility is crucial for influencing consumer purchasing decisions. This high level of influence could be attributed to the trust factor; consumers tend to trust influencers who appear credible, making their endorsements more effective. Credibility is built on authenticity, expertise, and the perceived honesty of influencers. In a digital environment where consumers are bombarded with choices and information, credible influencers serve as trusted guides, making their recommendations more persuasive and likely to lead to purchases.
2. **Influencer Expertise:** The moderate positive correlation ($r_s(148) = .431, p = <.001$) between influencer expertise and purchasing intentions emphasizes the value consumers place on authoritative knowledge in their decision-making processes. Expertise signifies an influencer's deep understanding and skill in a particular domain, which can enhance the influencer's persuasiveness. When influencers share content that reflects their expertise, they not only inform but also inspire confidence in their recommendations, making it more likely that consumers will follow through with purchases based on those endorsements.

3. **Influencer Attractiveness and Content Appeal:** A positive correlation of ($r_s(148) = .247, p = .002$) suggests that while attractiveness and content appeal significantly influence purchasing intentions, their impact is less pronounced compared to credibility and expertise. This relationship indicates that the aesthetic and entertainment value of an influencer and their content can enhance engagement and interest. However, these attributes may play a supporting role in the decision-making process, enhancing the overall appeal of the influencer's message without being the primary driver of purchasing decisions.
4. **Influencer Engagement Level:** The strong positive correlation ($r_s(148) = .604, p = <.001$) highlights the importance of how influencers interact and engage with their audience. Engagement encompasses the ways in which influencers connect with their followers, including responding to comments, participating in conversations, and creating community-focused content. High engagement can foster a sense of connection and loyalty, making followers more receptive to the influencer's recommendations. This relationship underscores the role of engagement in building a rapport with the audience, which in turn can directly influence purchasing intentions.

The findings underscore influencer marketing's impact on consumer purchasing intentions. Credibility emerges as the most critical attribute, followed by engagement, expertise, and attractiveness/content appeal. This hierarchy reflects the importance of trust and relationship-building in the influencer-consumer dynamic, suggesting that influencers who focus on these aspects are more likely to sway consumer purchasing decisions.

4.5 Summary

The investigation into the influence of social media influencers on the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students was a study that yielded insightful revelations about digital consumer behavior. With a sample size of 150 respondents, the study delved into various influencer attributes, such as credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement levels, and scrutinized how each factor weighed upon students' decisions to purchase.

Demographically, the study was male-dominated, with 64.7% of respondents being male. This detail is not just a mere reflection of the sample but also indicates a potentially varying impact of influencers across genders, which might necessitate gender-specific influencer strategies. The overwhelming majority of the respondents, at 94%, were followers of influencers. This statistic not only confirms the widespread engagement with influencers among university students but also paints a picture of the potential scope of influencers' impact on their audiences. It's a testament to the role of social media as a pervasive force in shaping consumer preferences and behaviors. A significant finding was the high percentage of students, 81.3%, who indicated that their purchasing decisions had been influenced by social media influencers. This influence is a powerful endorsement of the role of influencers as a marketing and commercial force.

The Spearman's correlation analysis provided a focused examination of how credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level each contribute to influencing purchasing intentions among the students. Trustworthiness and expertise emerged as particularly impactful, with both attributes displaying strong correlations

with purchasing intentions. These findings highlight the critical role of perceived credibility and knowledgeability in influencers, underscoring their importance in the decision-making process of consumers.

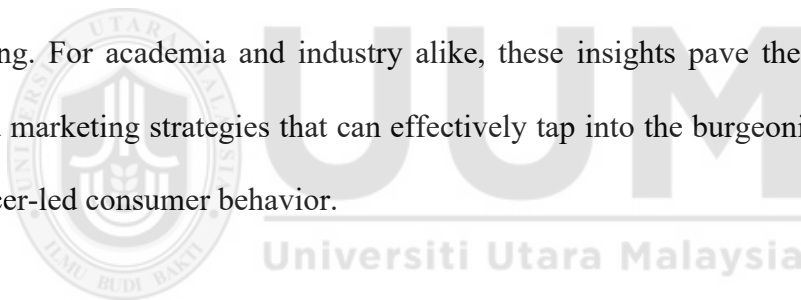
Below is the table summarizing the hypotheses for each Research Objective (RO) and indicating whether each hypothesis is accepted or rejected based on Spearman's correlation analysis.

Table 4.6.1:
Hypotheses Summary

Hypotheses	Status	Statistics	Explanation
H1. Trustworthiness of social media influencers positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.	Supported	$r = 0.865$, $p < .001$	The very strong positive correlation affirms that trustworthiness significantly influences purchasing intentions, highlighting its critical role in the efficacy of influencer marketing.
H2. Expertise of social media influencers positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.	Supported	$r = 0.431$, $p < .001$	The moderate positive correlation confirms that expertise is a significant factor, with knowledgeable influencers more likely to affect consumer purchasing decisions.
H3. Attractiveness and content appeal of social media influencers positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.	Supported	$r = 0.247$, $p .002$	A positive correlation, though relatively weaker, indicates that attractiveness also plays a role in influencing purchasing intentions, albeit to a lesser extent than trustworthiness or expertise.
H4. Engagement with social media influencers' content positively influences purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students.	Supported	$r = 0.604$, $p < .001$	A strong positive correlation demonstrates that higher engagement levels significantly predict purchasing intentions, stressing the importance of active influencer-audience interaction.

In summary, the analysis reveals that all four attributes of influencers—trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement—positively influence Malaysian university students' purchasing intentions, confirming H1 through H4.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the complexity of influencer marketing's effectiveness, revealing that a nuanced understanding of audience demographics is crucial for optimizing marketing strategies. The study highlights the need for marketers and influencers to tailor their approaches based on detailed insights into their target audience's preferences and behaviors. The implications for marketers and influencers are clear: understanding the audience is paramount. Tailoring content and engagement to match the demographic profiles of followers could enhance the impact of influencer marketing. For academia and industry alike, these insights pave the way for more targeted marketing strategies that can effectively tap into the burgeoning potential of influencer-led consumer behavior.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Data collection for this study was conducted via an online survey, providing a direct and efficient means to engage with a widespread population of university students across Malaysia. By ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, the survey facilitated an environment conducive to acquiring genuine and reflective responses from respondents. This chapter synthesizes and interprets the findings derived from the investigation into the influence of social media influencers on the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students. It aligns the discussion with the established research objectives and integrates the analysis of data collected to provide a coherent narrative as follows:

1. **To Measure the Relationship between Trustworthiness and Purchasing Intentions (Trustworthiness-PI):** This objective focuses on examining how the perceived trustworthiness of social media influencers affects the purchasing intentions of university students in Malaysia, exploring the importance of influencers' credibility in consumer decision-making processes.
2. **To Measure the Relationship between Expertise and Purchasing Intentions (Expertise-PI):** It seeks to assess the impact of influencers' perceived expertise on the purchasing intentions of the students, determining the weight of authoritative knowledge in influencing consumer behavior.

3. **To Measure the Relationship between Attractiveness and Purchasing Intentions (Attractiveness-PI):** This aim involves investigating the effect of influencers' attractiveness, including physical appeal and content quality, on the purchasing decisions of the target audience, to understand how aesthetic and entertainment value contributes to influencer effectiveness.
4. **To Measure the Relationship between Engagement Level and Purchasing Intentions (Engagement level-PI):** The objective is to evaluate how the level of interaction and engagement between influencers and their followers influences the purchasing intentions of university students, highlighting the role of active engagement in fostering consumer trust and interest.

By delving into these objectives, the chapter aims to provide a detailed examination of the specific attributes of influencers and their individual impacts on purchasing intentions. This nuanced analysis seeks to elucidate the multifaceted role of social media influencers in shaping the purchasing behavior of university students in Malaysia, with the ultimate goal of deriving strategic insights that can enhance the efficacy of influencer marketing campaigns targeted at this demographic.

5.2 Discussion

The discussion of this study is carefully framed to align with the study's objectives, considering the insights gathered from 150 Malaysian university students who participated in the study. The primary aim is to dissect the influence of social media influencers on students' purchasing intentions, and how demographic factors modulate this relationship. The discussion will sequentially address each research objective, shedding light on the key findings and their broader implications.

5.2.1 Demographic Profile of the respondents

The demographic analysis of the 150 respondents participating in this study on social media influencers and purchasing intentions is essential for contextualizing the research findings. This section provides an in-depth look at the gender, age, educational background, and other relevant demographic data of the respondents, offering insights into their varied experiences and perspectives.

The respondent pool showed a notable skew towards males, comprising 64.7% ($n = 97$) of the sample, while females accounted for 35.3% ($n = 53$). This distribution offers significant insights into gender-based preferences and responses to influencer marketing, potentially indicating different patterns of social media engagement between male and female university students.

The age distribution highlights the youthful demographic of the study. Among the respondents, 15.3% ($n = 23$) were under 20 years, the largest group of 54% ($n = 81$) ranged from 21 to 30 years, and 30.7% ($n = 46$) were between 31 to 40 years. This age

range primarily represents young adults, a group highly active and influential in the digital and social media landscape.

The educational background of respondents was diverse, with Diplomas held by 19.3% (n = 29), Bachelor's Degrees by the majority of 52% (n = 78), Master's Degrees by 28% (n = 42), and a PhD by a minor 0.7% (n = 1). This mix provides a multi-layered perspective on how influencer marketing impacts students at various educational levels.

A wide range of universities were represented in the study. Significant contributions were from UM (16%, n = 24), UTM (27.3%, n = 41), and UPM (12.7%, n = 19). The diversity in educational institutions enriches the data with varying academic cultures and their possible intersections with social media usage.

A notable 94% (n = 141) of respondents indicated that they follow influencers, revealing a significant inclination towards influencer content among university students. On the flip side, this implies that 6% (n = 9) of the respondents did not follow influencers, suggesting a minority segment less influenced or interested in influencer content.

The data showed that a significant 81.3% (n = 122) of students had made purchases based on influencer recommendations, highlighting the substantial impact of influencers on student purchasing behavior. Conversely, this leaves 18.7% (n = 28) who did not make purchases influenced by social media influencers, indicating a segment of the student population that remains unaffected or skeptical of influencer-driven purchases.

The study revealed the most frequently used social media platforms, with Instagram leading at 57.3% (n = 86), followed by YouTube at 12.7% (n = 19), TikTok at 14.7% (n = 22), and Snapchat at 15.3% (n = 23). This ranking provides a clear insight into the preferred platforms for influencer engagement among the student demographic.

The responses indicated varied durations of daily social media usage: 46.0% (n = 69) spent 1-2 hours, 21.3% (n = 32) spent 2-3 hours, and 32.7% (n = 49) spent more than 3 hours. This diverse range in time spent on social media reflects varying degrees of exposure to influencer content among the respondents.

The study identified several product categories purchased through influencer recommendations: 12.0% (n = 18) for Beauty/Lifestyle/Fitness, 36.7% (n = 55) for Fashion Products, 18.0% (n = 27) for Food Products, 30.0% (n = 45) for Technological Items, and 3.3% (n = 5) for other categories. This breakdown provides insight into the areas where influencers most effectively sway purchasing decisions.

In summary, the demographic analysis uncovers the intricate dynamics of university students' interactions with social media influencers, highlighting various aspects like influencer following, purchase behavior influenced by influencers, platform preferences, time spent on social media, and the types of products purchased. This detailed examination is pivotal in understanding the extent of influencers' impact on the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students.

5.2.2 Spearman's Correlation Analysis

The study delved into examining the relationships between the attributes of social media influencers and the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students, employing Spearman's correlation analysis. This statistical approach was chosen for its ability to handle ordinal data and non-parametric distributions, making it well-suited for assessing the ranked perceptions and intentions captured in our survey. The analysis focused on four primary attributes of influencers: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level.

The Spearman's correlation coefficient between trustworthiness and purchasing intentions was significantly high, indicating a robust positive relationship. This result validates the hypothesis that trustworthiness has a significant relationship with purchasing intentions, underscoring the importance of perceived reliability and authenticity of influencers in motivating students' purchasing decisions. It highlights that influencers deemed trustworthy are more likely to sway their audience's buying behaviors, emphasizing the critical role of building and maintaining credibility in influencer marketing.

Expertise also demonstrated a strong positive correlation with purchasing intentions, supporting the hypothesis that influencers' perceived knowledge and authority in their domain significantly impact students' willingness to make purchases based on their recommendations. This finding suggests that influencers who are viewed as experts in their respective fields command greater influence over their followers' purchasing choices, reinforcing the value of specialized knowledge and competence in enhancing influencer effectiveness.

The relationship between attractiveness and purchasing intentions, while positive, was found to be less pronounced than that of trustworthiness and expertise. Nevertheless, the significant positive correlation confirms that the physical appeal and content quality of influencers do play a role in influencing purchasing intentions, albeit to a lesser degree. This outcome indicates that attractiveness contributes to the overall impact of influencers, with aesthetically pleasing content and appealing personas augmenting their ability to persuade consumers.

Engagement level exhibited a strong positive correlation with purchasing intentions, affirming the hypothesis regarding the significance of active interaction between influencers and their followers. This relationship underscores the effectiveness of engagement in fostering a sense of community and connection, which, in turn, enhances influencers' persuasive power. High levels of engagement signal to followers that influencers are genuinely interested in their audience, boosting the trust and relatability that are crucial for influencing purchasing decisions.

The Spearman's correlation analysis systematically confirmed that all four examined attributes of social media influencers—trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level—have significant positive relationships with the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students. These findings collectively highlight the influencer impact, with trustworthiness and expertise emerging as the most influential factors, followed by engagement level and attractiveness. This nuanced understanding aids in crafting more effective influencer marketing strategies that are sensitive to the attributes that most significantly drive student purchasing behaviors.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

This study's exploration of social media influencers' impact on Malaysian university students' purchasing intentions illuminates several pathways for future research and practical marketing applications. The significant relationships identified between influencer attributes—trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level—and purchasing intentions offer a solid foundation for these recommendations.

Integrating the comprehensive insights from the study on the influence of social media influencers on Malaysian university students' purchasing intentions, the recommendations are divided into two distinct parts: Future Research and Practical Applications. These recommendations aim to guide both academic exploration and the strategic deployment of influencer marketing practices.

a. Future Research

The study's findings illuminate the critical influence of social media influencers' attributes—credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level—on purchasing intentions, suggesting a fertile ground for future academic inquiry. To enhance our understanding and provide a more holistic view of influencer impact, future research should embrace a multi-methodological approach. Incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, could unravel the nuanced perceptions and attitudes of consumers towards influencers, offering depth to the quantitative insights obtained through Spearman's correlation analysis. This mixed-methods approach would allow researchers to capture the complex emotional and psychological dynamics at play in influencer-consumer interactions.

Moreover, the evolving nature of digital media and influencer marketing underscores the need for longitudinal research designs. Such studies could track changes in the effectiveness of influencer attributes over time, providing valuable insights into how consumer behaviors and preferences adapt in response to new media trends and technological advancements. Additionally, expanding the demographic scope of respondents to include broader age ranges, educational backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses would enrich the research landscape, enabling a more generalized understanding of influencer marketing's impact across diverse population segments.

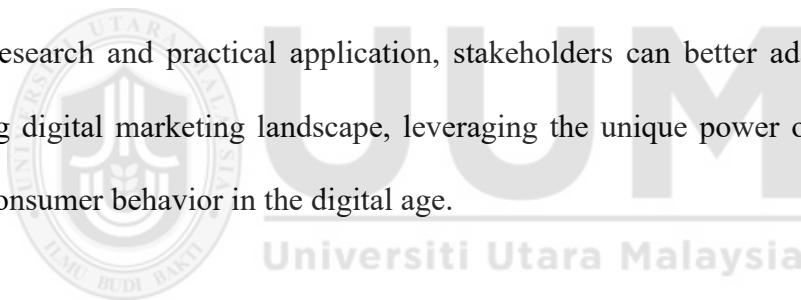
b. Practical Applications

On the practical front, the implications of this study for digital marketers are profound. The study highlights the paramount importance of aligning influencer attributes with the target audience's preferences and values. Marketers are encouraged to develop influencer marketing strategies that go beyond superficial appeal, focusing on the depth of the match between influencer characteristics and the audience's expectations. This strategic alignment, informed by the study's findings, can lead to marketing campaigns that not only resonate more deeply with consumers but also foster authentic connections and encourage meaningful engagement.

In light of the rapid pace of change in social media trends, continuous monitoring and adaptation of marketing strategies are essential. Marketers should employ a dynamic approach, regularly evaluating the impact of influencer campaigns and adjusting tactics in response to consumer feedback and evolving digital landscapes. This agile marketing strategy ensures that influencer campaigns remain relevant and effective, maximizing their impact on consumer purchasing intentions.

Furthermore, the insights derived from this study advocate for the development of educational programs targeting both influencers and marketers. Such initiatives could focus on enhancing understanding of the key influencer attributes identified as significantly influencing purchasing intentions, emphasizing the critical role of authenticity and expertise in successful influencer marketing. Through education and training, influencers can refine their content and engagement strategies, while marketers can better navigate the complexities of influencer selection and campaign design.

In conclusion, these recommendations, borne from the study's findings, call for a concerted effort to explore influencer marketing's intricacies further and apply strategic, informed approaches to harness its potential effectively. By pursuing these avenues for future research and practical application, stakeholders can better adapt to the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape, leveraging the unique power of influencers to shape consumer behavior in the digital age.



5.4 Implications

The exploration of the relationship between social media influencers' attributes and the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students offers critical insights with wide-ranging implications across various domains, from academic research to practical marketing application, policy formulation, and beyond. This study illuminates the intricate dynamics of digital consumer behavior, particularly among young consumers such as university students, emphasizing the need for a nuanced comprehension of how influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement uniquely influence purchasing decisions. Such understanding is invaluable for academics delving into consumer behaviors in the digital sphere, providing a foundational framework to further dissect how digital influences interplay in the decision-making process of young consumers.

For university students, the findings of this study serve as a vital reminder of the importance of critical consumption within the digital landscape. The demonstrated influence of social media influencers on purchasing decisions highlights the potential for consumer behavior to be shaped subtly yet significantly through influencer marketing. This awareness encourages students to approach digital content with a discerning eye, evaluating the underlying motives and authenticity of influencer endorsements before allowing them to shape their purchasing behaviors.

From a marketing standpoint, the study underscores the imperative of aligning influencer attributes with the preferences and values of the target audience. Marketers are called to move beyond mere aesthetic appeal and popularity metrics, focusing instead on a strategic matching of influencer characteristics with audience expectations

and interests. This strategic alignment promises to enhance the efficacy and efficiency of marketing campaigns, fostering deeper connections with the audience and yielding more impactful marketing outcomes.

Furthermore, the insights garnered from this investigation carry significant implications for the formulation of social media policies, especially concerning advertising standards and consumer protection. Recognizing the potent influence that influencers wield over young and impressionable audiences underscores the necessity for robust guidelines and ethical standards in influencer marketing practices. These regulations are essential in safeguarding consumers against misleading or manipulative content, ensuring a transparent and ethical digital marketing landscape.

Influencers themselves stand to benefit from an in-depth understanding of how their attributes impact consumer behavior. This knowledge empowers influencers to tailor their content and engagement strategies more effectively, enhancing their ability to influence responsibly while maximizing their positive impact on consumer behavior.

The academic domain, particularly business education, can also draw valuable lessons from the study's findings. Integrating these insights into marketing curriculums and training programs can equip future marketers with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complexities of the digital marketing environment, with a specific emphasis on the evolving role of influencers.

In essence, the ramifications of this study extend beyond the confines of academic research, influencing a broad spectrum of stakeholders including marketers, consumers, educators, influencers, and policymakers. It lays the groundwork for a strategic, informed approach to influencer marketing, urging all involved parties to appreciate the complex nature of influencer attributes and their consequent impact on consumer behavior. By acknowledging and responding to these dynamics, stakeholders are better positioned to devise strategies that resonate with the nuanced landscape of digital marketing and consumer engagement, ensuring that their actions are both effective and ethically grounded in an ever-evolving digital world.



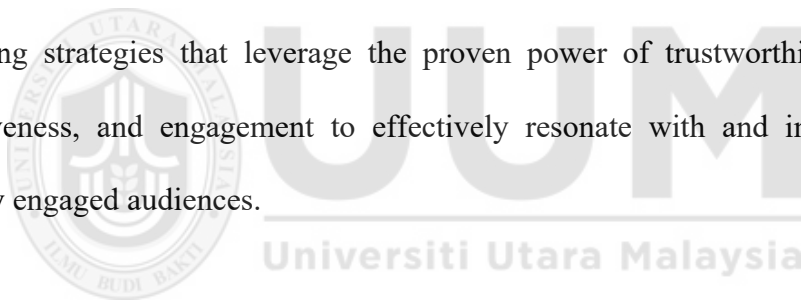
5.5 Conclusion

The investigation into the influence of social media influencers on the purchasing intentions of Malaysian university students rigorously tested hypotheses concerning four key influencer attributes: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement level. Spearman's correlation analysis provided definitive support for each hypothesis, illustrating the significant positive relationships between these attributes and purchasing intentions, with no hypothesis found to be null.

- **Trustworthiness** emerged as the most influential attribute, with a Spearman's correlation coefficient (r_s) value of **0.865**, highlighting its paramount importance in the context of influencer marketing. This underscores the critical role of perceived credibility in influencing consumer behavior.
- **Expertise** also showed a significant positive relationship with purchasing intentions, as evidenced by an (r_s) value of **0.431**. This reinforces the notion that the perceived knowledge and skill level of an influencer substantially impact consumer decision-making processes.
- **Attractiveness**, while demonstrating a weaker correlation compared to trustworthiness and expertise, still showed a notable positive impact on purchasing intentions with an (r_s) value of **0.247**. This indicates that the aesthetic appeal of influencers and their content plays a contributory role in shaping consumer preferences.
- **Engagement level** was found to significantly influence purchasing intentions as well, with an (r_s) value of **0.604**. This points to the effectiveness of active interaction and connection between influencers and their followers in motivating consumer purchases.

The Spearman's correlation analysis was instrumental in quantifying the direct relationships between influencer attributes and purchasing intentions, offering a nuanced understanding of how each attribute distinctly contributes to influencing Malaysian university students' purchasing decisions. The validation of all proposed hypotheses through this analytical approach underscores the real, substantial impact that influencers exert on their audience's purchasing behavior.

In summary, this study not only affirms the significant positive relationships between key influencer attributes and purchasing intentions among Malaysian university students but also highlights the nuanced, multifaceted nature of these influences. The findings provide a robust foundation for the development of targeted influencer marketing strategies that leverage the proven power of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and engagement to effectively resonate with and influence young, digitally engaged audiences.



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Appendix 1: Cover Letter for Questionnaire



Appendix 2: Questionnaire

The Impact of Social Media Influencers (SMI) on Consumer Behavior among Malaysian University Students

By participating in this survey, you agree to participate in the research project entitled as per above. Please answer all required questions sincerely and your cooperation is much appreciated. Your data provided is confidential and will not be shared to any third party.

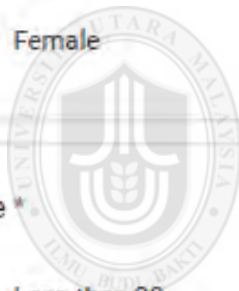
SECTION I : Demographics

Gender *

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Age *

- ☐ Less than 20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

Education Level *

- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Degree
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ PHD

University *

Your answer

Do you follow influencers on your social media? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you ever purchased due to recommendation from social media influencers? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

[Next](#)

[Clear form](#)

SECTION II : Social Media Usage

Social Media Usage

Which social media platforms do you actively use? *

- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Youtube
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ Instagram

How much time do you usually spend on Social Media per day? *

- ☐ More Than 3 Hour
- ☐ Less Than An Hour
- ☐ 1-2 Hour
- ☐ 2-3 Hour

Which Product/Service Categories You Bought/Buy Through Social Media? *

- ☐ Beauty/Lifestyle/Fitness
- ☐ Fashion Products
- ☐ Food Products
- ☐ Technological Items
- ☐ Others

Back

Next

Clear form

SECTION III : Influencer Credibility

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5=Strongly Agree

I believe that the influencers I follow on social media are generally honest in their content. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I trust the product recommendations made by influencers. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencers I follow seem sincere in their endorsements. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I feel influencers are reliable sources of information about products/services. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

The consistency in an influencer's content increases my trust in their product recommendations. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

[Back](#)

[Next](#)

[Clear form](#)

SECTION IV : Influencer Expertise

Influencers I follow demonstrate a high level of knowledge in their fields. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I consider influencers as experts in recommending products/services. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

The expertise of an influencer increases my interest in the products they endorse. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I value the opinions of influencers because of their expertise. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencers with specialized knowledge in a particular field are more persuasive in their endorsements. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

[Back](#)

[Next](#)

[Clear form](#)

SECTION V: Influencer Attractiveness and Content Appeal

The physical attractiveness of influencers impacts my perception of the products *
they endorse.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencers' content is more appealing when it is aesthetically pleasing. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

An influencer's lifestyle influences my perception of their credibility. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Attractive influencers tend to be more persuasive in their endorsements. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

The quality of an influencer's content presentation (like photography, video editing) influences my perception of the products they endorse. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

[Back](#)

[Next](#)

[Clear form](#)

SECTION VI: Engagement Level

I frequently interact (like, comment, share) with posts from influencers I follow. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencers I follow engage actively with their audience. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

The level of engagement by an influencer enhances the trustworthiness of their content. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I am more likely to follow influencers who regularly interact with their followers. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I feel more connected to a product when influencers engage in meaningful conversations about it. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

[Back](#)

[Next](#)

[Clear form](#)

SECTION VII: Consumer Purchasing Intention and Perception of Influencer Marketing

Influencers have significantly influenced my purchasing decisions. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I am more likely to purchase a product recommended by an influencer I trust. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Seeing a product endorsed by an influencer increases my desire to buy it. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencer endorsements play a crucial role in my brand choices. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I tend to trust and buy brands that are recommended by my favorite influencers. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree



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Influencer marketing is an effective strategy in today's digital world. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I find influencer marketing more relatable than traditional advertising. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencer marketing campaigns significantly influence consumer trends. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree



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I am more likely to trust a brand that uses influencer marketing. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Influencer marketing positively changes my attitude towards a product or brand. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

[Back](#)

[Submit](#)

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Appendix 3: Demographics

Gender

	N	%
Male	97	64.7%
Female	53	35.3%

Age

	N	%
Less than 20	23	15.3%
21-30	81	54.0%
31-40	46	30.7%

Education

	N	%
Diploma	29	19.3%
Degree	78	52.0%
Masters	42	28.0%
PHD	1	0.7%



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University		
	N	%
APU	1	0.7%
Buckinghamshire New University	1	0.7%
INTI College	2	1.3%
KDU	1	0.7%
MMU	1	0.7%
MSU	1	0.7%
NONE	1	0.7%
Politeknik Seberang Perai	1	0.7%
SAITO	1	0.7%
SEGI	1	0.7%
TAR UMT	1	0.7%
TARC	22	14.7%
UM	24	16.0%
UMP	1	0.7%
UNIMAP	1	0.7%
UNITAR	2	1.3%
University Tun Hussein Onn	1	0.7%
UOW KDU University College	1	0.7%
UPM	19	12.7%
UPSI	16	10.7%
USM	6	4.0%
UTAR	1	0.7%
UTM	41	27.3%
UUM	3	2.0%

Appendix 4: Social Media Usage

Following Influence in Social Media

	N	%
Yes	141	94.0%
No	9	6.0%

Purchased from Influencer Recommendation in Social Media

	N	%
Yes	122	81.3%
No	28	18.7%

Frequently Used Social Media

	N	%
Instagram	86	57.3%
Youtube	19	12.7%
TikTok	22	14.7%
Snapchat	23	15.3%

Time Spent per Day for Social Media

	N	%
1-2 Hour	69	46.0%
2-3 Hour	32	21.3%
More Than 3 Hour	49	32.7%

Purchase Type Through Social Media

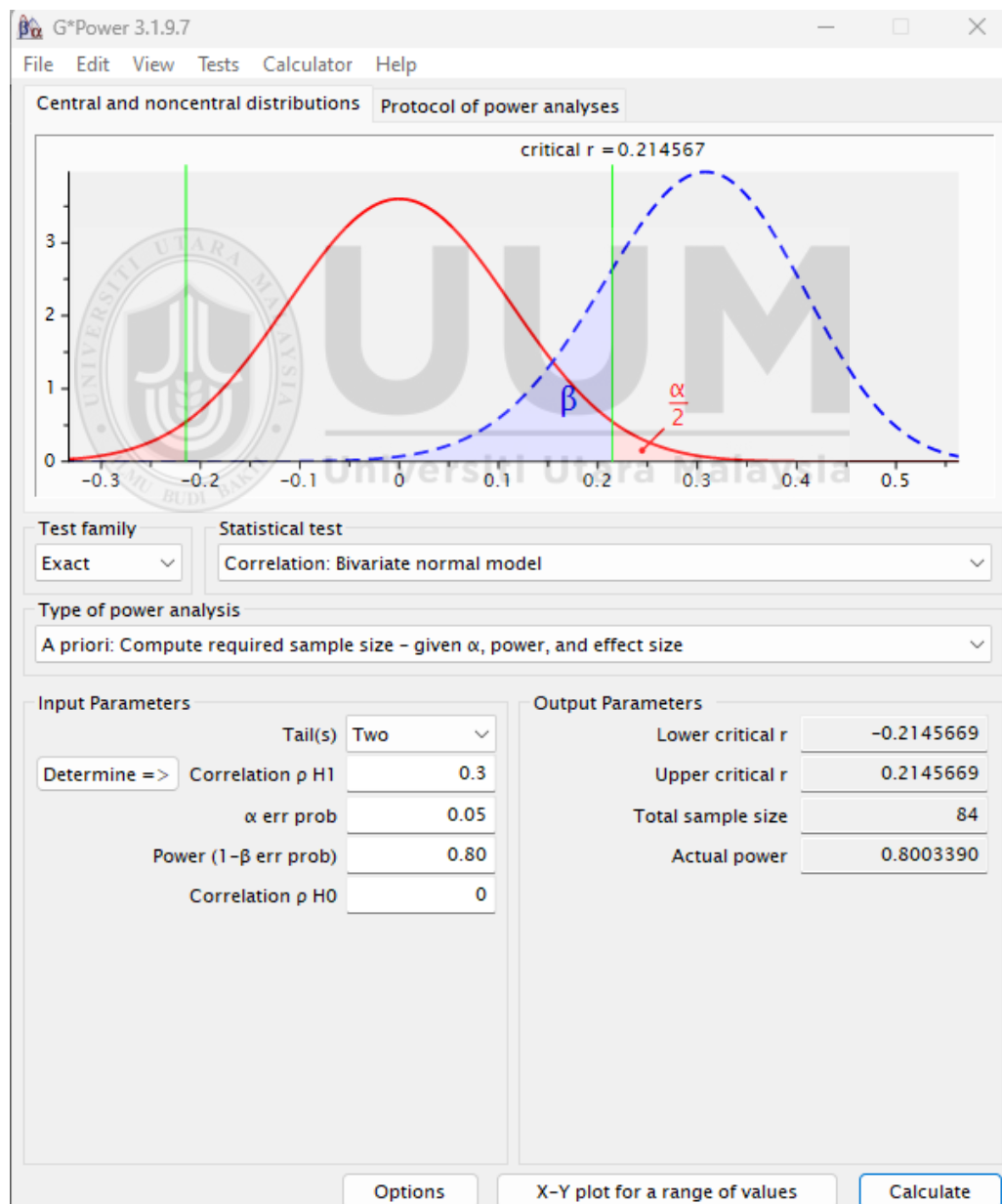
	N	%
Beauty/Lifestyle/Fitness	18	12.0%
Fashion Products	55	36.7%
Food Products	27	18.0%
Technological Items	45	30.0%
Others	5	3.3%

Appendix 5: Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Influencer_Credibility	150	2.60	4.80	4.1240	.68057
Influencer_Expertise	150	2.40	4.60	4.1520	.55354
Influencer_Attractiveness_Content Appeal	150	2.20	5.00	4.0413	.62533
Influencer_EngagementLevel	150	1.80	4.60	4.1027	.57217
ConsumerPurchasingIntention Perception_ofInfluencerMarketing	150	2.80	4.60	4.1440	.50587
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Appendix 6: G-Power Analysis



Appendix 7: Spearman's Correlation

Nonparametric Correlations

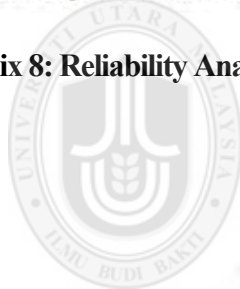
[DataSet3] C:\Users\User\Dropbox\PC\Documents\SMI Influence.sav

Correlations

			Credibility	Expertise	Engagement Level	Attractiveness _ContentAppeal	ConsumerPurchasingIntentionPerception_ofInfluencerMarketing
Spearman's rho	Credibility	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.621**	.606**	.488**	.865**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
		N	150	150	150	150	150
	Expertise	Correlation Coefficient	.621**	1.000	.721**	.809**	.431**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
		N	150	150	150	150	150
	EngagementLevel	Correlation Coefficient	.606**	.721**	1.000	.399**	.604**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
		N	150	150	150	150	150
	Attractiveness_ContentAppeal	Correlation Coefficient	.488**	.809**	.399**	1.000	.247**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		.002
		N	150	150	150	150	150
	ConsumerPurchasingIntentionPerception_ofInfluencerMarketing	Correlation Coefficient	.865**	.431**	.604**	.247**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.002	
		N	150	150	150	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 8: Reliability Analysis



Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's

Alpha N of Items

.969

30

Region	Country	City	Q1 2023										Q2 2023										Q3 2023										Q4 2023										Q1 2024																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																													
			Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units	Revenue	Profit	Units																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																						
North America	USA	Los Angeles	1200	150	1000	1300	160	1100	1400	170	1200	1500	180	1300	1600	190	1400	1700	200	1500	1800	210	1600	1900	220	1700	2000	230	1800	2100	240	1900	2200	250	2000	2300	260	2100	2400	270	2200	2500	280	2300	2600	290	2400	2700	300	2500	2800	310	2600	2900	320	2700	3000	330	2800	3100	340	2900	3200	350	3000	3300	360	3100	3400	370	3200	3500	380	3300	3600	390	3400	3700	400	3500	3800	410	3600	3900	420	3700	4000	430	3800	4100	440	3900	4200	450	4000	4300	460	4100	4400	470	4200	4500	480	4300	4600	490	4400	4700	500	4500	4800	510	4600	4900	520	4700	5000	530	4800	5100	540	4900	5200	550	5000	5300	560	5100	5400	570	5200	5500	580	5300	5600	590	5400	5700	600	5500	5800	610	5600	5900	620	5700	6000	630	5800	6100	640	5900	6200	650	6000	6300	660	6100	6400	670	6200	6500	680	6300	6600	690	6400	6700	700	6500	6800	710	6600	6900	720	6700	7000	730	6800	7100	740	6900	7200	750	7000	7300	760	7100	7400	770	7200	7500	780	7300	7600	790	7400	7700	800	7500	7800	810	7600	7900	820	7700	8000	830	7800	8100	840	7900	8200	850	8000	8300	860	8100	8400	870	8200	8500	880	8300	8600	890	8400	8700	900	8500	8800	910	8600	8900	920	8700	9000	930	8800	9100	940	8900	9200	950	9000	9300	960	9100	9400	970	9200	9500	980	9300	9600	990	9400	9700	1000	9500	9800	1010	9600	9900	1020	9700	10000	1030	9800	10100	1040	9900	10200	1050	10000	10300	1060	10100	10400	1070	10200	10500	1080	10300	10600	1090	10400	10700	1100	10500	10800	1110	10600	10900	1120	10700	11000	1130	10800	11100	1140	10900	11200	1150	11000	11300	1160	11100	11400	1170	11200	11500	1180	11300	11600	1190	11400	11700	1200	11500	11800	1210	11600	11900	1220	11700	12000	1230	11800	12100	1240	11900	12200	1250	12000	12300	1260	12100	12400	1270	12200	12500	1280	12300	12600	1290	12400	12700	1300	12500	12800	1310	12600	12900	1320	12700	13000	1330	12800	13