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The Effects of Social Media Influencer towards Factors of Muslim Millennial Generation's Attitude into Halal Food Product Purchase in Malaysia

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Abstract

Consumers have a tendency to reviews goods and services first before make a decision to buy. Consumer often to use the social platform to seek the information. In a current decade, the use of social media has in debate increased as a source to dig information. Social media influencers became part of the crucial medium in advertising goods and services to the consumers. The credible source of information by persuasive message can influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers towards goods and services. The global Halal industry as a one of the fastest growing markets, the whole industry is estimated to worth around USD2.3 trillion (excluding Islamic finance) a year. Thus, this paper will examine the attitudes of halal food products purchasing among Muslim Millennials using non-probability sampling method of 403 respondents. The findings of this study shown that Trustworthiness and Social Media Influencer Expertise's can affect attitude of halal food products purchasing among Muslim Millennial in Malaysia who are deemed as an influential group of consumers.

Keywords: Halal, Social Media Influencer, Consumer, Attitude, Millennial

Introduction

Halal global market is now following Malaysia, and other countries are competing to become a global hub in the halal industry. Malaysians are becoming more aware of the benefits of

halal food. In 2010, Malaysia became the region's halal centre. It is ideally positioned to become a leader in the halal sector, and it is also in the process of developing a global standard for halal certification. Due to these current commercial phenomena, several company owners have formed collaborations and partnerships with social media influencers who have more than 100 million followers (Hanson, 2018; Hashim et al., 2020). This is because the public or other Instagram users may persuade customers to follow the social media influencers who have many followers on their respective social media platforms (Jade, 2017). The effectiveness of social media influencers greatly attracts Instagram users to join them by launching the "power middle influences" to the audiences with a following of about 100 thousand to 200 thousand Instagram users (Chen, 2016; Anuar et al., 2020; Ghoreishii, 2020). The number of followers of a SMIS is used to determine their popularity. Previous scholars have thoroughly examined all of this information in other fields (Tahirah Abdullah et al., 2020). Nevertheless, what factors cause Muslim Millennial to be affected by social media influencers, and how these influences their buying intentions for halal food is still unclear (Abdullah et al., 2020). One of the advantages of using social media influencers from various digital social media sites such as Instagram, You Tube or Facebook, as a marketing tool is that the company will personally engage with new and current consumers while collecting reviews on the products (Kolarova, 2018).

In addition, the Instagram platforms have initially been used to share interesting photos and captions (Nik Hashim et al, 2019). Nonetheless, the social media platforms today, for example, the Instagram has evolved into a forum where businesses promote and sell their products and services. This is because photos are more appealing than words in capturing audiences' interests (Hanson, 2018; Hashim et al, 2019; Hashim et al, 2020). According to Forbes (2016), followers follow the Instagrammers based on the useful and innovative content shared on their social media sites, which piqued customers' interest in pursuing their lifestyle, Attitude, and personal characteristics shown in influencers' profiles such as the Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and blogs.

Even though in many past studies had related issues regarding halal food product issues but in this paper will explain focus on Millennial generation in choosing halal food product affected by social media influencer matters. Thus, this study aims to examine the factors of social media influencer influencing attitude of purchasing halal food behaviour. What are the predominant determinants which may influence millennial generation attitude toward halal food product affected by social media influencer?

The following structure of this section in this paper: The meaning of the theory that underpins this study, discussed in Section 2, as well as earlier research on factor by social media influencer in halal products. Next, Section 3 determines the research methodology, trailed by Section 4 which discusses the empirical result findings. Lastly, Section 5 presents the resolutions of the study.

Literature Review

a. Trustworthiness

The trust paradigm in communication is the receiver's level of confidence in believing the message expressed by SMIS (Abdulmajid & Wahid, 2012; Nejad, Sherrell, & Babakus, 2014; Ohanian R., 1990). Consumers are more likely to consider a product recommended by SMIs if

they believe its sense of trustworthiness (Liu, Jiang, Lin, Ding, Duan, & Xu, 2015). According to Li et al. (2010), customer confidence in endorsers is an important factor when looking for detailed information online. Social media influencers, as opposed to corporations or brands, are considered more reliable (Forbes, 2016), and have become a key source of product knowledge for consumers. According to Kim and Johnson (2015), consumers' buying decisions are generally influenced by those with close relationships, such as family and friends. Customers are more likely to consider social media influencers' recommended products if they trust the company (Liu et al., 2015). According to Rebelo (2017), the trustworthiness of an influencer is more convincing. When Instagram users view an influencer as dependable, truthful, consistent, genuine, and trustworthy, they are considered trustworthy.

Hypothesis (H1): Trustworthiness to social media influencer positively affecting Muslim millennial generation's attitude of halal food products purchasing in Malaysia.

b. Expertise

A high level of knowledge or skills is described as expertise. This variable can also be defined as the extent to which the endorser possesses sufficient expertise, experience, or skills to promote the products. In contrast to the image of created spokespersons for certain products, social media influencers have more experiences and expertise (Van der Waladt et al., 2009). The word "expertise" was used by social media influencers to effectively complete product-related tasks (Alba & Hutchinson, 2007). Social media influencers have the potential to develop trustworthy and innovative messages for a brand or product to capture the interest of customers. The purchasing intention of target audiences is higher when social media influencers are more reliable (Silvera & Austad, 2004) since they have more experience, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Nik Hashim et al., 2019; Mohamad et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2020). Essentially, social media influencers use their experience to post about brands and products on social media platforms, where their followers are likely to see them. Here, the messages of the brands and products are seen as more authentic and trustworthy as compared to paid sponsorship advertising (Kassoway, 2015).

Hypothesis (H2): Social Media Influencer Expertise's positively affecting Muslim Millennial generation's attitude of halal food products purchasing in Malaysia.

c. Likeability

According to Teng et al (2014), likability can be defined as the information receiver's fondness towards the information source's physical looks and personal characteristics. A consumer's perceptions towards a SMI can be said as one of the strongest factors in affecting the consumer's attitude towards an SMI (Li et al., 2014). Furthermore, according to Brickman et al. (1975), the longer individuals are exposed to a person's views, the more they like the person. According to Cheung et al. (2014), when customers believe they have similar characteristics to SMIs, they are more likely to purchase the same items that SMIs use in their everyday lives and have posted to SMIs social media. Therefore, a well-known SMI is perceived as a more pleasant individual, with more influence over consumer product decisions (Uzunolu & Kip, 2014; Abidin, 2016; Forbes, 2016). This is due to the fact that customers frequently consider SMIs as role models (Forbes, 2016).

Hypothesis (H3): Likeability to Social Media Influencer positively affecting Muslim Millennial generation's attitude of halal food products purchasing in Malaysia.

d. Attitude

According to Ajzen (1991), Attitude is a person's degree of favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior. A person's Attitude can be described as a comprehensive review of a concept. An individual's Attitude towards a certain activity reflects how much individuals enjoy or despise doing it (Nico et al, 2021). The Attitude of a Muslim consumer shows his or her overall assessment of his or her likes and dislikes in practising the Islamic faith (Rochmanto & Widiyanto, 2014). Consumers who seemed to have a positive Attitude toward halal products are more likely to purchase halal food items, which make *Attitude* one of the most important element affecting halal food product purchase intentions (Elseidi, 2018).

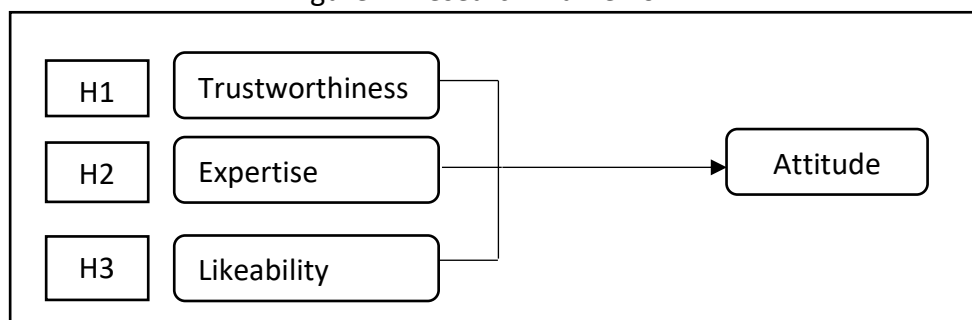
In fact, consumers' Attitudes are positively influenced by social media influencers with appealing appearances and attributes, which in turn effect buying intent (Lim, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). Consumers, on the other hand, would not accept and purchase any information or items advocated by social media influencers who are unfavourable to them, preferring instead to buy products and information supported and recommended by their favourite social media influencers (Li, Lee, & Lien, 2014; Kapitan & Silvera, 2015). Moreover, when it comes to gender, ladies have a larger possibility of being affected. This is due to their desire to purchase the things used by social media influencers in order to emulate their favourite persons on social media (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Wilcox, Kramer, & Sen, 2011; Wilcox, K.; Stephen, A., 2013; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Therefore, a physically appealing individual has a better chance of altering consumers' minds. The SMISphysical attributes draw attention to the products and encourage customers to buy the recommended items (Eren-Erdogm et. al, 2016). This is because social media influencers are frequently viewed as role models by customers (Forbes, 2016).

In addition, people's Attitudes towards halal cuisines are also influenced by the idea that the food is Halal. Ultimately, this perception could lead to positive responses such as a desire to purchase the products.

Research Framework

Figure 1 depicts the research framework of this study. The research framework attempts to explain relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In this study, the independent variables are Trustworthiness, Social Media Influencer Expertise's and Likeability and the dependent variables an Attitude of Halal Food Products Purchasing in Malaysia.

Figure 1: Research Framework



Research Methodology

Sample

For the purpose of this study, 455 of questionnaires were randomly distributed to respondents through self-administered questionnaires. Out of the distributed 455 questionnaires, a total of 415 were collected. 40 questionnaires were found missing at two collection points provided. However only 403 questionnaires were considered fit for sample sets due to completeness, reflected an overall rate of 46%. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), the general rule to identify the sample size is more than 30 and less than 500 for any area of researches. In this present study, the selected sample size is 403. Hence, such number is considered appropriate.

Research Instrument

This study uses the closed-ended questionnaires that provide alternative choices to the respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The questionnaire in this study consists of three sections. Section 1 contains four questions requiring demographic information. Section 2 requests the respondents to identify their attitude of Halal Food Products Purchasing. Meanwhile, Section 3 requests the respondents to disclose the factor that influencing their attitude of Halal Food Products Purchasing. Each item was measured using five points- Likert scale (1) indicated strongly agree - (5) indicated strongly disagree. There are various reasons for five-Likert scale to be used in this study namely, response rate would improve using five-Likert scale because the respondents will fill the questionnaire with honesty and devotion, five-Likert scale would help to reduce respondents' frustration compared to seven or nine-Likert scales (Rehman, Bhatti, & Chaudhry, 2019c), and only recognized variables from previous research would be used in determining the constructs in five-Likert scale (Arshad et al., 2020; Bhatti, Bano & Rehman, 2019; Bhatti & Rehman 2019b; Khan et al., 2019; Kraus, Rehman & Garcia, 2020; Rehman, Bano & Bhatti, 2019; Rehman, Mohamed & Ayoup, 2018).

Results And Discussion

Descriptive Results

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by their demographic profiles—gender, age, education and income level. These demographic items also reflect the control variables of the study parameter. More than half of the respondents were female (69.5%). Majority of them fell in the age cohort of 26-45 (33.5% + 40.1%). Education level among respondents are widely distributed from the basic education level (3.72%), STPM/Diploma/A Level holders (11.6%) to Degree holders (34.74%), Master holders (28.78%) and Phd holders (21.09%).

Table 1: Demographic results among respondents, N=403

| Number (N=403) | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Demographic Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 123 | 30.5 |
| Female | 280 | 69.5 |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| 19 – 23 years old | 108 | 26.79 |
| 24 – 28 years old | 125 | 31.02 |
| 29 – 33 years old | 73 | 18.11 |
| 34 – 38 years old | 97 | 24.07 |
| <i>Race</i> | | |
| Malay | 363 | 90.1 |
| Chinese | 28 | 6.9 |
| Indian | 7 | 1.7 |
| Others | 5 | 1.2 |
| <i>Marital Status</i> | | |
| Single | 120 | 29.77 |
| Married | 267 | 66.25 |
| Widower/Widow | 16 | 3.97 |
| <i>Highest Education Level</i> | | |
| SPM | 15 | 3.72 |
| STPM/Diploma/A Level | 47 | 11.66 |
| Bachelor's Degrees | 140 | 34.74 |
| Master's Degrees | 116 | 28.78 |
| Doctoral Degrees | 85 | 21.09 |

Correlation Results among Variables

Table 2 presents the Pearson Correlation results to show the relationship between pairs of variables. The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between Muslim Millennial generation's trustworthiness, likeability and Social Media Influencer's Expertise towards attitude of halal food products purchasing is significant among female, elderly, high income earners nonetheless lower level of education respondents. For information on Halal products, female respondents show significant correlation effect while female, elderly and high-income earners are significant to willingness to spend for Halal products.

Table 2: Pearson correlation results among pairs of variables

| | Attitude | Trust worthi ness | Expertise | Like ability | Gen de r | Age | Race | Marit al status | Edu cation |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Attitude | | 0.408* * | 0.359** | 0.632* * | -0.058 | 0.0 34 | 0.13 8 | 0.345 ** | 0.032 |
| Trustworthi ness | 0.408** | | 0.836** | 0.771* * | -0.185 | 0.6 07* * | - 0.38 9* | 0.280 | 0.031 |
| Expertise | 0.359** | 0.836* * | | 0.828* * | 0.468 * | 0.1 95 | 0.18 9 | 0.229 * | 0.334* |
| Likeability | 0.362** | 0.771* * | 0.828** | | 0.181 * | 0.0 28 | - 186 * | -0.164 | 0.285* |
| Gender | 0.225** | 0.363* * | -0.280* | 0.286* * | | 0.3 89 ** | 0.17 6* | 0.289 * | 0.175* |
| Age | 0.292* * | -0.275 | 0.186* * | 0.286* * | - 0.189 * | | 0.56 5** | - 0.712 * | 0.189* |
| Race | 0.682* * | 0.164* * | -0.168* * | 0.028 | 0.382 * | 0.6 07 | - 0.27 9 | 0.289 ** | 0.038 |
| Marital Status | 0.432** | 0.607* * | -180* * | 0.385* * | 0.328 | 0.1 98* 9 | - 0.27 9 | | 0.432* * |
| Education | -0.286* * | 0.163 | -1.29 | 0.031 | - 0.183 * | 0.1 95* 3 | 0.16 3 | 0.165 | |

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

Multiple Regression Results among independent

$$\text{Attitude} = B_0 + B_1\text{Trustworthiness} + B_2\text{Expertise} + B_3\text{Likeability} + B_4\text{Gender} + B_5\text{Age} + B_6\text{Race} + B_7\text{Marital Status} + B_8\text{Education} + e \quad (1)$$

Table 3: Multiple regression results among the independent and control variables

| | Coefficients | T Estimates | Sig. |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Constant | 1.526 | 1.461 | 0.145 |
| Trustworthiness | 0.173 | 5.615** | 0.000 |
| Expertise | 0.080 | 3.599*** | 0.000 |
| Likeability | 0.016 | 0.485 | 0.628 |
| Adjusted R | | 0.651 | |

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

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A regression analysis was performed to further examine the relationship between social media expertise's, trustworthiness and likeability Millennial Muslim towards social media

influencer influencing attitude of halal food products purchasing in Malaysia. All independent and dependent variables were entered into the regression analysis as specified in model 1. Table 3 depicts the results of the regression analysis. The results show that respondents' trustworthiness towards social media influencer is significant towards attitude of halal food products purchasing among Muslim Millennial in Malaysia at 90% confidence level. Additionally, social media influencer's expertise confirms the significance relationship towards attitude of halal food products purchasing among Muslim Millennial in Malaysia at 99% confidence level. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported while H3 is rejected since likeability towards social media influencer in promoting halal food product shows non-significance effect to attitude of halal food products purchasing among Muslim Millennial in Malaysia. The two supported results imply that the greater interest on Halal products and the higher willingness level to spend on Halal products among respondents are significant to their attitude.

Conclusion

Products with Halal certification provide assurance to Muslim consumers regarding the Syariah compliance ingredients and production processes requirements. Nevertheless, Halal logo itself may not be sufficient to convince Muslim consumers in their purchasing decision. Even though the Muslim Millennial generation prefers to get the opinion and review from the opinion leader like social media influencers, they are still looking for the quality of the reviewer such as trustworthiness and expertise. Hence, this shows that the Muslim Millennial generation exemplify maturity and understanding in making appropriate decision toward their need and desire. This study was able to provide new perspectives and proficiency in terms of elements such as credibility and honesty, expertise, and likeability that might affect Millennial Muslim consumers' decisions to seek and buy halal food products and services. This would consequently offer valuable feedback to Malaysian Halal product and service providers on how to accelerate and diversify the marketability of their products, and make them more aware that they should not just focus on marketing their products and services based on Halal certifications only.

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