

The Influence of YouTube Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Products in Malaysia

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Abstract

The use of cosmetics has transformed from an aesthetic preference to an essential part of daily routines, particularly among women. This shift, driven by factors such as the increasing number of working women, urbanization, and growing self-confidence, has led to the steady growth of the cosmetics industry in Malaysia. This study explores the relationship between YouTube influencer credibility specifically, expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness with consumer purchase intentions in Malaysia's cosmetic market. The research draws on the Source Credibility Model and applies Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via IBM-SPSS-AMOS version 24 to analyze data collected from 393 respondents. The findings indicate that expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. Expertise emerges as the most influential factor, as consumers tend to trust knowledgeable influencers, particularly in product categories where expertise reduces perceived risks. Attractiveness also positively affects purchase intentions, with consumers associating aesthetically appealing influencers with desirable qualities. Trustworthiness plays a critical role in fostering trust and brand loyalty, as consumers value influencers perceived as sincere and authentic. These results highlight the growing influence of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior and provide valuable insights for marketers looking to enhance their influencer marketing strategies. The study underscores the importance of selecting influencers who balance expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness to build credibility and effectively drive consumer purchase decisions.

Keywords: Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Purchase Intention, Social Media Influencer

Introduction

In today's society, particularly among women, the use of cosmetics has evolved from being merely an aesthetic choice to becoming a necessity (Eze et al., 2012). This shift can be attributed to several factors, including the rising number of working women, urbanization, and increased self-confidence, which have collectively driven consistent growth in Malaysia's cosmetics industry in recent years (Nik Mud et al., 2020). A relatively new trend contributing to this growth is the widespread popularity of beauty vloggers on YouTube. These influencers

create and share content that resonates with consumers, particularly women, as demonstrated in previous research (Afifah, 2019). This study aims to analyze the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior in the digital era, focusing specifically on YouTube as a platform where beauty influencers provide reviews on cosmetic products. It is observed that consumers increasingly prefer engaging with video content on platforms like YouTube over text-based information (Chen & Dermawan, 2020). Unlike other social media platforms that rely primarily on static images and text, YouTube offers dynamic video content that provides a more immersive narrative experience. As a result, YouTube has emerged as an effective platform for consumers to exchange opinions and experiences related to product purchases and usage (Muda & Khan, 2020).

Influencer marketing has seen exponential growth in recent years. By 2019, the influencer marketing industry was valued at \$6.5 billion, with over 100,000 influencers worldwide (Yıldırım, 2021). Approximately 80% of marketers now collaborate with social media influencers to capture consumer attention and promote businesses (Dinh & Lee, 2021). Social media influencers, who accumulate substantial followings through content creation and distribution across various platforms, have become key players in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Yuan & Lou, 2020). As social media platforms continue to grow in popularity, the importance of customer engagement and communication has expanded significantly (Dinh & Lee, 2021). These platforms have fundamentally altered how consumers seek and share information about products and services. Social media influencers, by presenting themselves as approachable and trustworthy authorities, are reshaping consumer interactions with products.

From the perspective of interactive marketing, the landscape is rapidly evolving from company-driven marketing communications to consumer-centered, collaborative interactions (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). While anyone can create and share video content, only a select few influencers have the power to significantly shape the purchasing intentions of large audiences (Le & Hancer, 2021). User-generated product reviews from influencers are perceived as credible sources of information that can positively affect consumer behavior (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Furthermore, when consumers perceive information as credible, they are more likely to trust these reviews and make purchase decisions based on them (Rahim et al., 2015). In the age of social media, the credibility of influencers plays a critical role in shaping consumer decisions, as credible sources are more likely to convey effective messages (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Research has shown a direct relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention, as well as a positive correlation between perceived source credibility, consumer attitudes towards user-generated content, and purchase intention (Kim & Choi, 2018; Muda & Hamzah, 2021). However, there remains a gap in research on the specific impact of information credibility on consumer purchase intentions (Daowd et al., 2020).

Beauty influencers on YouTube are often perceived as genuine and trustworthy due to their willingness to share personal details and their high status within the YouTube community (Turcotte et al., 2015). Influencers who possess higher social status, education, or ranking have greater potential to influence the behavior of their followers (Li & Du, 2011). Previous research has attributed the effectiveness of YouTube influencer marketing to the high level of credibility consumers place on the information provided by these influencers (Xiao et al., 2018). YouTube hosts a wide array of communities, including the rapidly

expanding beauty community. This growth has heightened consumer awareness of the benefits of cosmetics, especially as personal lifestyles have evolved. Today, cosmetics are viewed as essential items not only for women but also for metrosexual men (Ahmad et al., 2015). The global cosmetics industry has expanded significantly due to the rising demand for these products. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the relationship between YouTube influencer credibility and consumer purchase intention, particularly within the Malaysian cosmetic market. Understanding this dynamic is critical, given the increasing reliance on social media as a source of product information and the growing influence of beauty vloggers on consumer behavior.

Literature Review

Expertise

Expertise refers to the degree to which an influencer is perceived to possess the necessary knowledge, experience, or skills to effectively promote a specific product (Ki et al., 2020). According to Yin et al (2018), expertise is defined by the level of knowledge an individual source holds, while Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2020), describe it as a combination of high levels of knowledge, experience, and problem-solving abilities within a particular domain. Social media influencers perceived as experts in their field are more likely to establish strong parasocial relationships with their followers (Lou & Kim, 2019). Consumers tend to trust and act on the advice of influencers who are seen as experts, compared to those without such expertise. An influencer is considered an expert when they demonstrate substantial knowledge across various categories. For instance, a YouTube influencer specializing in lifestyle might offer reviews and recommendations on diverse topics such as makeup trends, perfumes, and fashion. In the context of social media, followers are more inclined to purchase products endorsed by influencers who possess a high level of expertise and experience with the products they promote (Weismueller et al., 2020). This behavior is driven by the perception that expert influencers personally use the endorsed products, as depicted in their vlogs. Expertise enhances an influencer's credibility, as it assures followers that the influencer understands the products they recommend (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). Moreover, an influencer's expertise not only strengthens their credibility but also directly influences consumers' purchasing behavior and intentions (Schouten et al., 2020). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H1: Expertise has a significant influence on purchase intention

Attractiveness

Attractiveness is one of the three key components of the source credibility model, alongside trustworthiness and expertise (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2017). It refers to the external physical appearance of an individual, often characterized as being classy, sexy, or elegant (Amos et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1990). Consumers are more likely to prefer and purchase a product from a brand when they see individuals they admire using, wearing, or displaying that particular product (Forbes, 2016). The attractiveness of an influencer is often conceptualized and measured by qualities such as beauty, elegance, class, likability, and physical appeal (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). Beauty vloggers, for instance, are often perceived as having specialized knowledge in the beauty industry, and their physical attractiveness, particularly when endorsing beauty products, plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. A person's attractiveness is primarily assessed by their physical appearance (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Consumers are more easily persuaded by influencers

who are physically appealing, particularly when these influencers make product recommendations in their videos. For example, an influencer who endorses skincare products and appears to have flawless skin is more likely to convince their followers to use the recommended products. When an attractive social media influencer endorses a product, that endorsement is more likely to be accepted by consumers (Lim et al., 2017). Consequently, the attractiveness of an influencer can have a positive effect on consumers, influencing their purchase decisions. Ultimately, an influencer's ability to shape consumer behavior and intentions is closely linked to their perceived attractiveness (Yuan & Lou, 2019).

H2: Attractiveness has a significant influence on purchase intention

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined as the degree to which recipients perceive an information source as credible and reliable (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). It pertains to the credibility of the source, reflecting how beneficial or dependable the audience finds it (Yin et al., 2018). In the realm of social media, influencers are often viewed as trustworthy due to the perceived similarity between them and their followers, which fosters a sense of trust. Trustworthiness in this context refers to the extent to which a follower believes in the sincerity and reliability of an influencer, based on their observed behavior and actions (Lou & Kim, 2019). Most influencer-generated content is perceived as genuine opinions rather than promotional material, particularly in the beauty industry, where the trustworthiness of influencers is a critical factor (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2017). It is considered the most powerful and essential component of an influencer's credibility (Schouten et al., 2020). Influencer marketing heavily depends on the perceived trustworthiness of influencers, whose credibility often stems from personal experiences rather than formal qualifications or specialized knowledge (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers are generally regarded as more trustworthy than celebrity endorsements, mainly because of their ability to establish friendly and relatable connections with their audience. When consumers view an influencer as trustworthy, this has a positive effect on their attitudes and behaviors, including their purchase intentions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). In the cosmetics industry, the issue of trustworthiness is particularly relevant, with research showing a strong link between social media influencers and attractiveness, as physical appearance plays a key role in shaping consumer attitudes (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2017).

H3: Trustworthiness has a significant influence on purchase intention

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is widely recognized as a key predictor of purchasing behavior (Chakraborty, 2019). It plays a crucial role in market research, serving as a foundation for understanding consumers' purchasing behavior (Yang & Mao, 2014). Defined as a conscious plan by a consumer to acquire a product, purchase intention involves a process that includes both evaluative and normative judgments (Visentin et al., 2019). In the digital age, when consumers seek additional information about a product, they often turn to virtual communities for guidance. The likelihood that online community members will buy a product based on online reviews is referred to as their purchase intention (Hsu, 2021). Moreover, a consumer's attitude towards a product can help determine their interest in making a purchase (Cheah et al., 2015). For example, before making a purchase decision, consumers often evaluate the opinions and comments of other users. When the information provided is relevant to their needs, it can positively influence their purchase intention (Alalwan, 2018).

Thus, understanding purchase intention is essential for predicting consumer behavior in both traditional and digital marketplaces.

Methodology

This study focused on women aged 18 to 56 years. To ensure that the data collected accurately reflected the general population of women in Malaysia, two key demographic questions, race and location, were included. Additionally, the location data accounted for respondents from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. The study employed both purposive and snowball sampling methods. The instruments for the study's variables were adapted from previous research to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Minor modifications were made to the wording to suit the specific context of this study. Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire, resulting in a total of 393 responses, which were analyzed using IBM-SPSS-AMOS 24.0.

Finding and Discussion

Result of CFA Procedure

Table 1 presents the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), detailing the factor loadings for the dimensions and items associated with each construct and sub-construct. The table also provides important measures of construct validity, including the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) for each construct. The factor loadings indicate the strength of the relationship between the observed variables and their underlying constructs, while the AVE values reflect the proportion of variance explained by the latent constructs. Additionally, the CR values offer insights into the internal consistency and reliability of the constructs, ensuring that the measurement model is both valid and reliable. The findings presented in Table 1 confirm that this study successfully met all the necessary criteria for construct validity. The factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, demonstrating strong item reliability. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were all greater than 0.50, indicating that the constructs captured more than half of the variance in the observed variables, thus establishing convergent validity. Finally, the Composite Reliability (CR) values surpassed the 0.60, confirming the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement model. These results collectively affirm the robustness of the model and the appropriateness of the constructs used in this study.

Table 1

Summary of Convergent Validity

Variable	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
Expertise	0.70	0.604	0.884
	0.78		
	0.82		
	0.79		
	0.79		
Attractiveness	0.86	0.723	0.912
	0.85		
	0.83		

	0.86		
Trustworthiness	0.74	0.653	0.904
	0.82		
	0.80		
	0.83		
	0.85		
Purchase Intention	0.85	0.668	0.858
	0.83		
	0.77		

Table 2
Summary of Discriminant Validity

Construct	Expertise	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Purchase Intention
Expertise	0.777			
Attractiveness	0.434	0.850		
Trustworthiness	0.426	0.416	0.808	
Purchase Intention	0.562	0.542	0.526	0.817

To ensure discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE value for each construct must be higher than the correlations found between that construct and all of the other components (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As presented in Table 2, the discriminant validity criteria have been satisfied because none of the pair-wise construct correlation values are higher than the square root of AVE.

Result of SEM Path Analysis

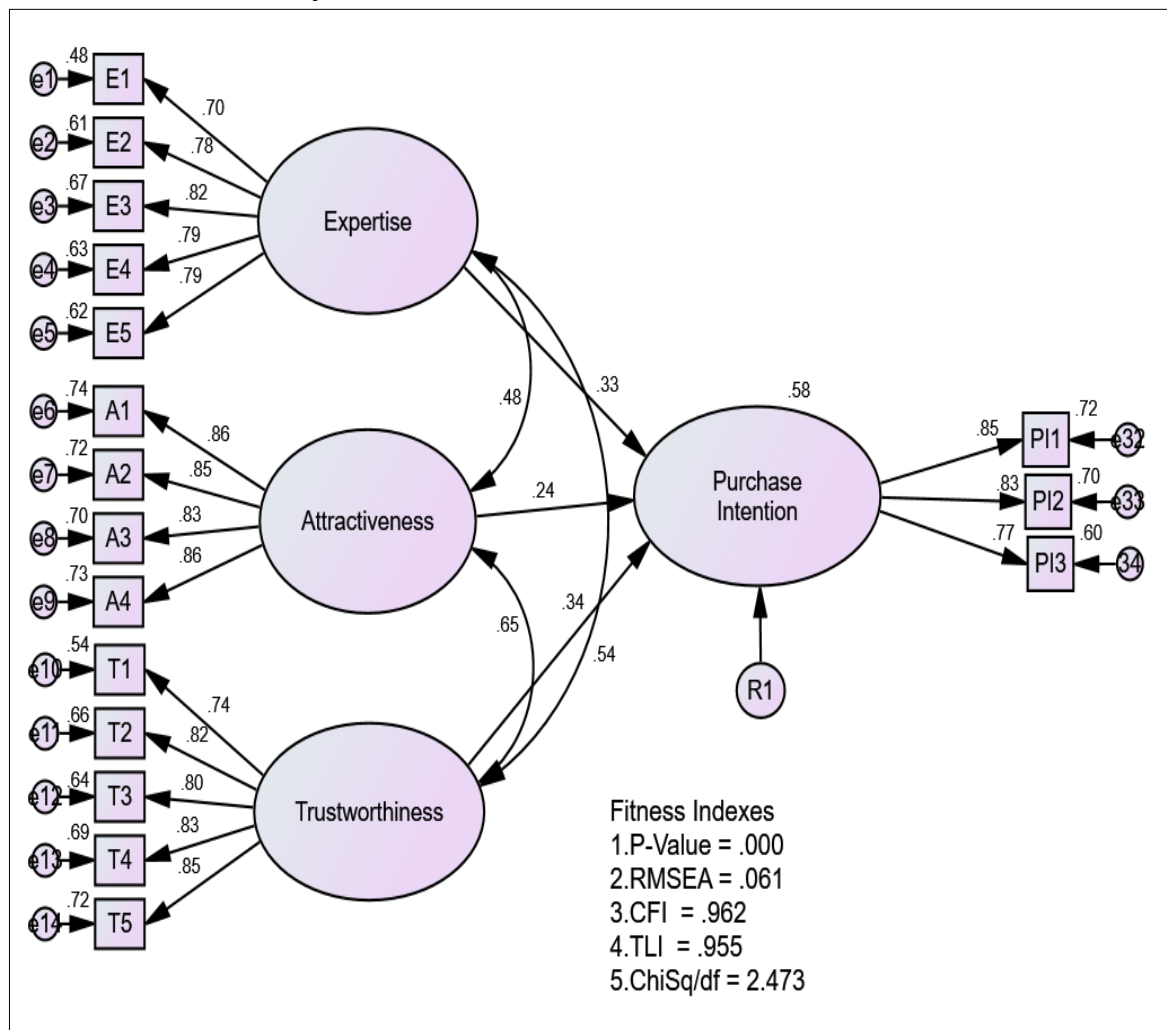


Figure 1. Path coefficients between main constructs in the structural Model.

The results of this study, based on the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), provide substantial evidence supporting the validity and robustness of the proposed model in explaining consumer purchase intentions for cosmetic products. Construct validity was confirmed through the SEM-generated fitness indices, which satisfied the required criteria for absolute, incremental, and parsimonious fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.061 falls within the acceptable limits, indicating a good fit between the model and the data. Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) values, at 0.962 and 0.955 respectively, both surpass the recommended threshold of 0.9, further validating the model's suitability. Additionally, the chi-square/df ratio of 2.473, well below the maximum acceptable value of 5.0, reflects the model's efficiency and low complexity. Collectively, these indices confirm that the measurement model is well-specified and exhibits strong construct validity.

Table 3

Path regression coefficient and its significance

Hypothesis		Estimate	S.E	C.R.	P	Label
Purchase Intention	<--- Expertise	0.395	0.067	5.928	***	Significant
Purchase Intention	<--- Attractiveness	0.219	0.054	4.027	***	Significant
Purchase Intention	<--- Trustworthiness	0.313	0.059	5.274	***	Significant

The results of the path coefficient analysis, as presented in Table 3, indicate statistically significant relationships between the examined variables. Specifically, expertise exhibits a significant positive effect on purchase intention (Estimate = 0.395, S.E = 0.067, C.R = 5.928, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the level of expertise demonstrated by YouTube influencers substantially enhances consumers' intention to purchase cosmetic products. Additionally, attractiveness is found to significantly and positively influence purchase intention (Estimate = 0.219, S.E = 0.054, C.R = 4.027, $p < 0.001$), implying that consumers are more likely to engage in purchase behavior when they perceive YouTube influencers as physically attractive. Moreover, trustworthiness also exerts a significant positive impact on purchase intention (Estimate = 0.313, S.E = 0.059, C.R = 5.274, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that consumers are more inclined to purchase when they perceive influencers as credible and reliable. In conclusion, all proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) are supported, confirming that expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness are critical determinants of consumer purchase intentions in the context of cosmetic products promoted by YouTube influencers.

Conclusion

This study provides robust empirical evidence supporting the significant role of YouTube influencers' credibility particularly their expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness in shaping consumers' purchase intentions within the cosmetic industry. The results demonstrate that influencers perceived as knowledgeable and skilled (expertise) can significantly influence consumer decision-making by providing credible and informative content that builds trust and confidence in the promoted products. This suggests that expertise plays a crucial role in industries, such as cosmetics, where product knowledge and professional endorsements can reduce consumer uncertainty and perceived risk. Additionally, the positive effect of influencer attractiveness on purchase intention indicates that physical appeal continues to be an important factor in digital marketing strategies, especially in visually-driven platforms like YouTube. Consumers tend to associate attractiveness with desirable qualities and are more likely to engage with content from influencers they perceive as visually appealing. This underscores the value of aesthetic appeal in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase behavior.

This research expands the understanding of how influencer credibility, a subset of source credibility theory, functions within the YouTube platform. By dissecting the dimensions of credibility, this study provides insights into how these factors translate into the consumer's purchase intentions in the specific context of cosmetic products. Furthermore, this research highlights how influencer credibility shapes attitudes toward brands, extending the theoretical foundations of influencer marketing beyond traditional advertising contexts.

Moreover, the significant impact of trustworthiness highlights the necessity for influencers to be viewed as reliable, sincere, and authentic in their product endorsements. Consumers are increasingly skeptical of endorsements that lack authenticity, and influencers who can establish a genuine connection with their audience are more likely to inspire trust and foster brand loyalty. Trustworthiness, therefore, emerges as a vital determinant in building long-term relationships between influencers, brands, and consumers. These findings have important implications for marketers and brands seeking to leverage influencer marketing strategies. To maximize effectiveness, companies should carefully select influencers who align with their brand image and possess the appropriate mix of expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. Furthermore, brands should encourage influencers to maintain authenticity and transparency in their promotional content to build credibility with their audience. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and highlights the critical role of influencer credibility in driving consumer purchase decisions in the contemporary marketing landscape.

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