

The Impact of Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchasing Decisions: A Case Study in the Fashion Industry

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's fashion sector has grown dramatically in recent years, driven primarily by influencer marketing's ascent to prominence in advertising and consumer interaction. Within this dynamic framework, influencer credibility—which includes competence, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—has emerged as a critical component in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the complex relationship between customer behavior and influencer credibility in the Indonesian fashion business. It combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Our research suggests that dependability and competence are important aspects of influencer credibility that favorably affect consumers' decisions to buy. Although relevant, attractiveness has a relatively smaller impact. Furthermore, it was found that cultural relevance was a significant element, as consumers favored influencers that shared the norms and values of Indonesian culture. These insights offer a deeper knowledge of the interaction between influencers and customers in Indonesia's dynamic fashion market, which is helpful advice for influencers and marketers alike as they try to optimize their tactics in this quickly changing scene.

Keywords: Influencer Credibility, Consumer Purchasing, Fashion Industry, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, Indonesia's fashion sector has grown enormously, primarily due to the widespread use of digital platforms and the rise of influencer marketing as a powerful tool for advertising and customer interaction. Indonesia, a country of over 270 million people and a rich culture, has developed into a thriving hub for the fashion industry [1], [2]. An exciting research opportunity has emerged to examine the impact of influencer credibility on consumer purchase decisions in this particular context [3]–[5]. This opportunity stems from the unique mix of a dynamic market and a rising influencer ecosystem.

In the past few years, the fashion industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth. The industry contributes 18.01% or IDR 116 trillion to Indonesia's creative economy [6]. This growth can be attributed to several factors, including the rise of e-commerce, social media influencers, and the increasing awareness of fashion trends among the population. The widespread use of social media has led to the emergence of influencer marketing, where social media influencers endorse products or brands in various industries, including fashion [7]. This has helped Indonesian fashion brands reach a wider audience and increase their market share.

Moreover, the fast fashion model has become increasingly important for the global economy, with the fashion industry being the third-largest industry in the world after the automotive and technology industries [6]. However, the fast fashion industry has also been criticized for its negative environmental impact, being the second most polluting industry in the world [6].

In response to these concerns, there has been a growing interest in sustainable fashion practices. For example, some researchers have suggested that patchwork design can lead the fashion industry towards sustainability and slow fashion [8]. Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence in fashion retail has been explored to optimize conversion, average order value, and repeat purchase

rate by understanding customer preferences and suggesting the right products and outfits for them [9].

The relationship between influencer marketing and credibility is crucial for the success of marketing campaigns. Influencer credibility includes elements such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, which can significantly impact consumers' perceptions, preferences, and purchasing decisions [10]. Influencers with high credibility are more likely to exert a stronger influence over their followers, potentially increasing brand engagement and conversion rates.

Several factors contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing. For instance, the perceived authenticity of social media influencers is a key driver of their persuasiveness as brand endorsers⁹. A study found that perceived SMI authenticity is a multidimensional construct consisting of sincerity, truthful endorsements, visibility, expertise, and uniqueness, with each dimension having varying effects on consumers' evaluation of an SMI, willingness to follow an SMI, and intention to purchase products that SMIs recommend [11]. Another study showed that the trustworthiness and expertise of social media influencers significantly predict followers' purchase intention, with the influence of attractiveness on purchase intention being greater when materialism is high [12]. Furthermore, collaborations between influencers and renowned brands can enhance consumers' attitude towards the message, their purchase intentions, and the perceived credibility of the influencer [13].

In conclusion, the relationship between influencer marketing and credibility is essential for the success of marketing campaigns. High credibility can lead to stronger influence over followers, increased brand engagement, and higher conversion rates. Factors such as perceived authenticity, trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, as well as collaborations with renowned brands, can contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is now a key component of advertising campaigns for companies in the Indonesian fashion market, from small local shops to global fashion conglomerates. Influencers are frequently consulted by consumers seeking style advice, product recommendations, and fashion inspiration. Some significant questions are raised by this change in consumer behavior: How credible do Indonesian consumers think influencers are, and how much does that affect their fashion purchases? Which aspects of an influencer's credibility matter more in this situation? What influence does culture have on this dynamic?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Influencer Marketing

With its rise to prominence in modern marketing tactics, influencer marketing is revolutionizing the way goods and services are marketed and used. It is characterized by strategic alliances between companies and people who have a sizable social media following [14]–[16]. Influencers use their authenticity and credibility to engage and persuade customers by creating and sharing content that promotes goods and services to their audience. This cooperative strategy has become increasingly popular in a variety of fields, including fashion. From the early celebrity endorsements to the micro- and nano-influencers of today, who frequently have more genuine and specialized followings, influencer marketing has evolved. Influencers have developed into important go-betweens for brands and customers in the fashion sector, setting trends and providing style inspiration [17]–[19].

Influencer marketing has grown and diversified remarkably in recent years. [14], [19], brands have expanded their influencer portfolios by working with a variety of influencers, ranging from macro-influencers with millions of followers to micro-influencers with smaller but highly engaged audiences. Influencer diversity enables marketers to efficiently contact different target market segments. Data demonstrates how successful influencer marketing is. 63% of marketers intend to increase their influencer marketing budgets, and 89% think that the return on investment (ROI) from influencer marketing is on level with or higher than that of other marketing channels, according to a 2020 Influencer Marketing Hub survey. The increasing importance of influencers in influencing customer behavior is highlighted by these phenomena.

2.2 Credibility of Influencers

Understanding the idea of influencer credibility is necessary to understand the workings of influencer marketing. Credibility is defined as the plausibility and dependability of an influencer's content and recommendations [20]. It has several dimensions. The influencer's expertise and understanding in a certain area, such fashion, beauty, or fitness [21]–[23]. How much people believe an influencer to be fair, dependable, and honest (Erdogan et al., 2001). The physical attractiveness and likeability of the influencer, which could strengthen the content's persuasiveness [23], [24].

[25], [26] assert that building and maintaining customer loyalty and trust depends on influencer credibility. Because people see respectable influencers as reliable information sources, customers are more likely to take recommendations from them [27], [28]. Furthermore, consumers frequently develop parasocial relationships with influencers and see them as friends or confidants [25]. This emotional connection strengthens the influencer suggestions' effect on consumer behavior. Research has shown time and time again that consumers are more inclined to interact with and purchase products and services that trustworthy influencers suggest [3], [29]–[31]. Consequently, it is evident that the trustworthiness of influencers has a significant role in influencing the purchases made by clients.

2.3 Consumer Behavior in the Fashion Sector

Numerous factors impact consumer purchase decisions in the fashion sector. These consist of personal preferences, opinions from peers, brand reputation, cost, and marketing tactics. Social media and influencers are becoming crucial components of the fashion consumer's decision-making process in the digital age [32], [33].

Customers are using social media sites like Instagram and TikTok as virtual catwalks where they can find products, get fashion inspiration, and stay up to current on trends [34]. Influencers have established themselves as powerful personalities influencing customer decisions because to their carefully chosen material and genuine stories [35].

Culture and demographics have a significant impact on consumer behavior in the fashion sector, although these elements are not universal (Liu et al., 2019). Given that Indonesia is a nation with a diverse population and a rich cultural tapestry, it is critical to comprehend how these elements interact with influencer marketing.

3. METHODS

The impact of influencer credibility on customer purchasing decisions in Indonesia's fashion industry is examined in this study using a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods strategy

provides a thorough knowledge of the phenomenon by combining quantitative and qualitative data collecting and analysis methodologies [36].

3.1 Data Collection

Two primary strategies were used to acquire data for this study: quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Every approach has a unique set of benefits for capturing various facets of the study goals.

Survey Approach

The participants in the survey were chosen using a deliberate sampling technique. The goal of this approach was to guarantee that respondents were both active fashion industry customers and had exposure to influencer-generated material. A total of 375 people were involved in the study, all of whom were recruited using fashion-related social media platforms and forums to guarantee that they were representative of the target market.

The purpose of the survey questionnaire was to get quantitative information about consumers' perceptions of influencer credibility and how that perception affects their decisions to buy. A mix of demographic and closed-ended questions with Likert scale responses were included in the questionnaire.

Interview Technique

The pool of survey respondents who indicated an interest in taking part in follow-up interviews was used to select participants for the qualitative interviews. To guarantee diversity in the interview group, a purposive sampling technique was employed, accounting for variables including age, gender, and the frequency of interaction with fashion industry influencers.

In-depth qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the interview protocol was to find out how participants saw the trustworthiness of influencers, what factors were most important to them, and how their material affected their decisions to buy fashion-related items. With participants' permission, audio recordings of interviews will be made.

The adequateness of qualitative data collection is assessed using the criterion of data saturation. Interviews will go on until no new ideas or themes come to light. Verbatim transcriptions of the audio recordings will be made, and the transcripts will be safely kept.

3.2 Analyzing Data

This study's data analysis procedure combines quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Statistical software is used to analyze the survey's quantitative data. We will utilize descriptive statistics to compile survey results and demographic data. Regression analysis and other inferential statistics will be utilized to investigate the connection between customer purchase decisions and influencer credibility variables. Interview-derived qualitative data will be subjected to thematic analysis. Finding recurrent themes, patterns, and insights in the transcripts of the interviews is part of this process [37]. Several researchers will be involved in the iterative analysis to improve validity and reliability.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quantitative Results

Before delving into the analysis of the survey data, let's take a brief look at the respondent profiles. The survey received responses from 375 participants, representing a wide range of demographics. A total of [74%] identified as female, [26%] as male. The majority of respondents fell into the 17-25 age bracket, with [66%] of participants in this category. [76%] reported that they engage with fashion content and influencers on social media platforms regularly. [60%] reported an annual income of Rp. 4,000,000-5,000,000, while [40%] fell into the lower income bracket.

Perceptions of Influencer Credibility

Respondents were asked to rate the credibility of influencers based on three key dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, using a Likert scale (1 = Not Credible, 5 = Highly Credible). The mean scores for each dimension were as follows:

1. The mean score for expertise was 4.15, indicating that, on average, respondents perceived influencers as credible sources of expertise in the fashion industry. This suggests that expertise plays a significant role in influencer credibility among respondents.
2. The mean score for trustworthiness was 4.32, indicating that, on average, respondents perceived influencers as trustworthy in the eyes of respondents. Trustworthiness appears to be a significant dimension of influencer credibility among the surveyed population.
3. The mean score for attractiveness was 3.78, suggesting that, on average, respondents found influencers moderately attractive. This dimension may have a moderate impact on influencer credibility among the respondents.

Influencer Impact on Consumer Purchasing Decisions

To understand the influence of influencers on consumer purchasing decisions, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which influencers affected their fashion-related purchases. The results indicated: 45% of respondents reported that influencers had a significant impact on their purchasing decisions. 30% stated that influencers had a moderate influence. 25% indicated that influencers had minimal to no impact on their buying choices.

Regression Analysis

To further explore the relationships between influencer credibility dimensions (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) and their impact on consumer purchasing decisions, a regression analysis was conducted: The regression analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived expertise of influencers and their impact on consumer purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). There was a strong positive relationship between perceived trustworthiness of influencers and their impact on consumer purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$). Perceived attractiveness of influencers also had a positive impact on consumer purchasing decisions, although this relationship was less strong compared to expertise and trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$).

4.2 Qualitative Results

Themes from Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interviews provided rich insights into the perceptions and experiences of respondents regarding influencer credibility and its impact on purchasing decisions. Several recurring themes emerged.

Authenticity vs. Commercialization, many respondents emphasized the importance of authentic content from influencers, expressing concerns when influencers appeared overly commercialized. Respondents highlighted that influencers who demonstrated genuine expertise and knowledge in fashion were more persuasive and trustworthy. Building a connection with influencers, feeling that they share similar lifestyles or values, was a significant factor in influencing purchasing decisions. Cultural factors played a crucial role, with some respondents preferring influencers who aligned with Indonesian cultural norms and values.

4.3 Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings echoed and provided depth to the quantitative results. For instance, qualitative insights highlighted that trustworthiness and expertise were critical credibility dimensions for Indonesian consumers, aligning with the quantitative findings.

5. CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing is becoming a major factor in influencing consumer choices in the quick-paced Indonesian fashion sector. The complex relationship between customer behavior and influencer credibility has been examined in this study, providing insight into important factors influencing consumer loyalty and trust. The results of our study validate that influencer reputation is mostly based on competence and trustworthiness, which have a noteworthy favorable effect on consumer purchase decisions. Although appearance has an impact, it is not as great. The qualitative results also highlight how crucial cultural relevance is in the Indonesian context. Customers look up to influencers who share their cultural norms and beliefs, which emphasizes how important it is for influencers and brands to be authentically cultural in their marketing. Finally, by providing useful information for both marketers and influencers, this study advances our knowledge of the dynamics of influencer marketing in Indonesia's fashion sector. When developing influencer strategies, industry practitioners must take into account the ever-changing influencer ecosystem and the significance of credibility, knowledge, trustworthiness, and cultural alignment. Through this approach, they can cultivate more robust relationships with customers, augment brand interaction, and eventually propel prosperous and culturally relevant marketing initiatives inside the thriving Indonesian fashion industry.

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