

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON PURCHASING INTENTION TOWARDS PET PRODUCTS. A QUANTITATIVE STUDY AMONG FEMALES IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The advent of technology and social media has contributed to the rise of social media influencers, and more marketers and advertisers are using them to boost revenue and sales. This research aimed to explore the relationship between social media influencers and the intention to purchase by Malaysian females. The predictors in this study were trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, source respect and source similarity. This was a quantitative study that used a self-administered questionnaire. Based on convenience sampling, primary data was collected from 202 respondents. The results revealed that only source attractiveness and source similarity were positive and significant predictors of intention to purchase. Source similarity had the highest impact on intention to purchase. However, source trustworthiness, source expertise and source respect showed an insignificant impact on intention to purchase. The findings will provide a better understanding to marketers and retailers of pet products on the engagement of social media influencers. To the researcher's knowledge, this is one of the first studies that focused on the influence of social media influencers on the purchase of pet products by females. This study added new insights to the current understanding of the essential attributes related to the engagement of social influencers.

Keyword: *Intention to Purchase, Social Media Influencers, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Respect, Similarity, Female Consumers*

1.0 Introduction

Today, social media usage is one of the most prominent and favoured online activities among individuals and organizations. As stated in the report by Statista, more than 3.6 billion people are using social media around the world today. The number of social media users in 2017 was 2.86 billion, and the figure is projected to reach 4.41 billion in 2025 (Statista, 2021a). In addition, the time spent by internet users on social media and other messaging apps is around 144 minutes per day, and this is also on an increasing trend (Statista, 2021a). Another report

by Smart Insights estimated that 53.6% of the world's population uses social media, and the average daily time spent on social media is 145 minutes (Chaffey, 2021). The report by Datareportal (2021) stated that there is 4.2 billion or 53 per cent of the world's population are social media users, and there is a 13 per cent year-on-year growth. The time spent worldwide on social media is 2.25 hours. In Malaysia, the time spent on social media is much higher at 3.01 hours. The report also stated that 44.8% of internet users search for brand information on social media. In Malaysia, 59.5 per cent of internet users search social media for brand information (Statista, 2021b). The growth of social media and the time spent on social media have transformed marketing (Chaffey, 2021). This has also led to the usage and influence of social media influencers.

In social media marketing promotions and campaigns, the deployment of social media influencers is gaining higher demand (De Veirman et al., 2016). The advent of technology and social media has contributed to the rise of social media influencers, and more marketers and retailers are using them to boost revenue and sales (Glucksman, 2017; Vodak et al., 2019; Rupchandani, 2020). The study by Markets and Markets (2020) revealed that the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of influencer marketing platforms is expected to increase from USD 6.0 billion in 2020 to USD 24.1 billion by 2025. A survey by Linqia (2020) revealed that influencer marketing is now more mature and possess the necessary skills and know-how to assist brands in connecting in meaningful ways with target customers.

Furthermore, it was reported that around 40% of marketers ran six or more campaigns in 2019 and 57% plan to allocate higher budgets to influencer marketing in 2020. Social media influencers are also getting greater attention in Malaysia. The statistics provided by Statista (2021) showed that around 75 per cent of Malaysian consumers are aware of social media influencers and have followed at least one influencer on social media. It was also reported that companies in Malaysia are changing their marketing tactics by allocating greater budgets to engage social influencers (The Star, 2020). One of the strategies used by marketers to strengthen their brand presence and increase sales is to use influencer marketing. One of the most effective channels in the marketing mix today is influencer marketing (Dhesi, 2020).

The worldwide market for pet products and pet food is growing. For instance, the worldwide pet food market was expected to grow from \$72.07 billion in 2020 to \$75.29 billion in 2021 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.5%. The pet food market is expected to exceed USD90 billion in the year 2025 (Global Newswire, 2021). The pet population in Malaysia has shown an increasing trend, and this will add to the growth in demand for pet products. For example, the pet cat population grew from 615,000 in 2014 to 795,000 in 2018, while Malaysia's pet dog's population increased from 361,500 in 2014 to 402,500 in 2018 (Yuen, 2019). This has given rise to higher demand for pet products, and the retailers and suppliers of pet products see a growing market for pet products (Jander, 2019).

Studies have shown that social media influencers are used to influence customers' purchasing behaviours (Jin, Muqaddam and Ryu, 2019). Previous studies have revealed a positive association between influencer endorsement and purchasing behaviour of consumers (Wiedmann and Metternheim, 2019; Woodroof, 2019; Taillon et al., 2019). The results of a study by Jin et al. (2019) revealed that consumers perceived endorsement of products by celebrities on Instagram as more trustworthy and they showed a positive attitude towards the brands that were endorsed by celebrities. Similarly, another study by Pick (2020) revealed that social media influencers had a favourable impact on the buying behaviour of consumers. Another study by Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2019) examined the relevance of influencers'

attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness in online campaigns and found that trustworthiness followed by attractiveness were the strongest components of brand loyalty and trust that led to purchasing intention. However, the relevance of expertise was insignificant. However, the results of another study by AlFarraj et al. (2021) revealed that influencer attractiveness and expertise had a significant impact on customers engagement. The study found that the influencers attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise were not significant predictors of purchasing intention. This shows that the results from past studies are not consistent.

The above review shows that social media usage is now very high and still growing. The importance of social media influencers is also growing in demand. However, in addition to the inconsistent results shown by past studies, there is a dearth of empirical studies that have examined the impact of social media influencers' endorsements on purchasing intentions by females. This study aims to fill the gap by examining the influence of the social media influencers study aims to fill this gap by exploring whether social media influences trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity influences the purchasing intention of females towards pets' products. Most of the past studies examined the impact of social media influencer endorsements on purchasing intention. This study will focus on the purchasing of pet products by females. In addition to the theoretical contribution, this study will provide a better understanding to retailers and marketers on the impact of influencers endorsement towards purchasing intention. To the best knowledge of the author of this study, this is one of the first studies that examined whether the social media influencer's trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity had an influence on the purchasing intention of females towards pets' products.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Influencers and Intention to Purchase

Social media influencers have been defined differently by scholars and researchers (Enke and Borchers, 2019). One of the complete definitions is by Enke and Borchers (2019), who referred to social media influencers as third-party individuals who have accumulated a substantial number of followers or relationships with a specific quality to influence others that includes consumers through content production, distribution, interaction, and personal appearance on the social media. Similarly, Freberg et al. (2011, p. 90) defined social media influencers as a new category of "independent third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media." (Abidin (2015) further added the status group of social media influencers, the specific areas of their postings or endorsements, the need for a following and engagement with their audiences, and their eagerness to monetize their activities as further criteria. Finally, the definition by Abidin (2015, para. 1) defined influencers as individuals who have a big following on social media and blogs through "textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating 'advertorials' into their blog or social media posts." Thus, all three definitions refer to social media influencers as third parties with a large number of followers on social media and blogs who can create valuable content and influence their audiences' attitudes and reactions.

The Source-Credibility Model originally presented by Hovland et al. (1982) and later further improved by Ohanian (1990), can be used to understand the sources or components related to the social media influencers. This model relates to the credibility of social media influences. The source includes trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. In today's environment, social media influences play an essential role in marketing because of the number of followers

they have (De Veirman et al., 2017) and the reputation they have created in specific areas or fields (Kim et al., 2017). Social media influencers become much more influential through engagement with their followers. This is shown through their ability to get Influencers' success, and influence can be determined by interaction and reactions from audiences on their endorsements and posts on social media and blogs (Arora et al., 2019). The engagement and interactions by influencers enable them to connect brands of products and services with customers (De Vries et al., 2012).

The intention to use and behaviours of consumers can be explained using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Based on this theory, consumer action or behaviour is explained by his or her behavioural intentions, according to this idea. Consumer's attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms all influence their behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1991). As a result, a consumer's behavioural intentions are indicators of how determined or strong that individual is to engage in or execute a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour is the most important predictor of a person's actual behaviour is their behavioural intention. Past studies have shown that social media influencers can affect the behaviour intention of consumers (Taillon et al., 2019; Chetioui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui, 2019; Wiedman and Mettenheim, 2019).

The study by Taillon et al. showed that retailers utilize social media influencers to market their products and brands. Another study by Ki and Kim (2019) found that the social media influencers attractiveness, prestige, expertise, informativeness and interactive contents towards the attitude and intention to purchase. The study by Chetioui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui (2020) confirmed that consumers attitudes toward fashion influencers had a positive and significant impact on brand attitude and purchase intention. The study further revealed that perceived credibility, trust, perceived behavioural control, perceived subjective norms, perceived expertise, and perceived congruence had a positive and significant association with attitudes. Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2019) confirmed that only the influencer's trustworthiness followed by attractiveness is a positive and significant predictor of brand loyalty and purchasing intention. On the contrary, the study by AlFarraj et al. (2021) found that the influencers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise did not significantly impact purchasing intention. This shows that the results from past studies are not consistent.

2.2 Relationship between Source Trustworthiness and Purchasing Intention Behaviour

Source trustworthiness is one of the constructs specified in the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990). According to the model, trustworthiness influences the effectiveness of an endorsement by a celebrity or influencer. Erdogan (1999) explained that the source trustworthiness is associated with the celebrity or influencer's perceived honesty, dependability, and reliability. This implies that celebrity or influencer endorsement of products or services is crucial, and marketers must use celebrities or influencers who are ranked highly based on the attributes stated by Erdogan (1999).

Several past studies have shown that source trustworthiness affects consumers' attitudes and purchasing intention (Weismueller et al., 2020; Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018; Wiedmann and Mettenheim, 2019). The results of a study by Weismueller et al. (2020) involving 306 Instagram users from Germany who was between 18 and 34 years showed that source trustworthiness was a positive and significant predictor of purchasing intention by consumers. Similarly, another study by Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2019) involving 288 participants found that trustworthiness was the strongest predictor of intention to purchase products and services. Chetioui, Benlafqih and Lebdaoui (2019) also had conducted research, and results

revealed that there is a significant impact of the trustworthiness and credibility to influence the followers' attitude as well as the purchase intention. However, some studies have found that the source trustworthiness was not a significant predictor of purchasing intention (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Hakimi et al., 2011). The study by Lou and Yuan (2018) found an insignificant impact of the source trustworthiness towards consumers' brand awareness and purchase intention. Similarly, Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019) study did not find a significant effect of the influencer's trustworthiness on purchase intention. The deviation could be due to cultural differences or due to the ambivalent or sceptical beliefs of the consumers. Therefore, past studies generally revealed a positive and significant relationship between source trustworthiness and purchasing intention, but some studies deviated. Therefore, the hypothesized as shown below will be empirically tested:

H1: Source trustworthiness of social media influencers have a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour of pet products by female consumers in Malaysia

2.3 Relationship between Source Expertise and Purchasing Intention

Source Expertise is another dimension in the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990). This refers to the influencer or celebrity the authority, competency, and qualification (Ohanian, 1990). Ohanian (1990) explained that expertise is the degree to which the influencer as a communicator is deemed to be a source of credible assertions (Ohanian, 1990). Ohanian (1990) added that the expertise dimension could be associated with the influencer experience, expertise, skill, knowledge, and qualification. Erdogan (1999) added the influencer or celebrity expertise refers to the level to which followers perceive the influencer as a valid source, experienced, knowledgeable, and qualified. Both definitions focus on how the consumers perceive the influencer skill, knowledge, experience, and qualification.

Several past studies have shown that source expertise is associated with consumers' purchasing intention, but the results were mixed and not consistent (Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget, 2019; Martensen et al., 2018). Martensen et al. (2018) found that expertise enhanced the persuasiveness of a fashion brand influencer. The study by Chekima, Chekima, and Adis (2020) that involved 126 Malaysian consumers revealed that the expertise dimension of source credibility had a significant and positive impact on consumer attitudes towards advertisement and brand. This further influenced the purchasing decision of consumers. Another study by Lou and Yuan (2018) found a positive relationship between influencer expertise and advertising that subsequently influenced the purchasing intention of consumers. However, some studies have shown that the influencer's expertise did not positively and significantly influence consumers purchasing behaviour (Balabanis and Chatzopoulou, 2019; Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget, 2020).

A study by Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019) did not show the influencer's expertise on consumers intention to purchase. Another study by Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020) empirically tested whether influencer endorsements are significantly related to influencers' perceived trustworthiness and expertise. The study found that influencer endorsers were perceived as trustworthy, but no impact was found on expertise. Similarly, Weidmann and Mettenheim (2019) study found that influencer expertise was not a significant predictor of purchasing intention. Therefore, based on past studies, the results on the impact of source expertise on consumers intention to purchase is not consistent. The hypothesis as shown below will be empirically tested to find out the impact of source expertise on purchasing intention:

H2: Source expertise of social media influencers have a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour of pet products by female consumers in Malaysia.

2.4 Relationship between Source Attractiveness and Purchasing Intention

Attractiveness is the third construct in the source-credibility model that was proposed by Ohanian (1990). As explained by Ohanian (1990), source attractiveness or sometimes referred to as likeability is the physical attractiveness of the influencer (Ohanian, 1990). Ohanian (1990) further explained that source attractiveness encompasses classy, attractive, handsome, or beautiful, elegant, and sexy characteristics. According to Erdogan (1999, p. 299), stated that attractiveness encompasses the influencer's physical attractiveness and other characteristics such as personality and athletic ability. The attractive influencers can be viewed as having a desirable normative profile (Lorenzo et al., 2010), or they may possess aspirational power to influence other people (Raven, 1965).

Several past studies have revealed that source attractiveness is a positive and significant predictor of purchasing intention by consumers (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Wiedmann and Mettenheim, 2019; Chekima, Chekima, and Adis, 2020). An influencer who is endowed with a high level of attractiveness is expected to influence their follower's purchasing intention. The study by Chekima, Chekima, and Adis (2020) found that source attractiveness was a positive and significant predictor of purchasing intention among Malaysian consumers. In another study by AlFarraj et al. (2021), where the target population were aesthetic dermatology consumers in Jordan, it was found that source attractiveness had a positive and significant impact on purchasing behaviour.

Further support was by Wang and Scheinbaum (2018), who stated that influencer attractiveness has a positive influence on the attitudes of customers. This results in advertisers using influencers in their design and promotion of campaigns. However, there are studies that have shown that the attractiveness of influencers does not affect the attitudes and purchasing intention of customers (Balabanis and Chatzopoulou, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2019). Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019) study did not prove that the influencers attractiveness can influence consumers' intention to purchase. The hypothesis, as shown below, will be empirically tested to analyze whether the attractiveness of the influencer will affect the purchasing intention of consumers.

H3: Source attractiveness of social media influencers have a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour of pet products by female consumers in Malaysia

2.5 Relationship between Source Respect and Purchasing Intention

Source respect is one of the dimensions in the TEARS (Shimp, 2007). Shimp (2010) explained that respect is the level of admiration or appreciation that an influencer gets based on the influencer's qualities and accomplishments. Respect is one of the key components of the attribute of influencers, but there are other attractiveness attributes other than just physical attractiveness, such as personality, athletic abilities, and other qualities (Hennayake & Hennayake, 2017). Consumers may respect an influencer based on the influencer's level of professionalism or the influencer's standpoints on politics, environment or lifestyle (Shimp, 2007).

Past studies have revealed an association between respect and purchasing intention (Hennayake, 2017; Pratiwi, Riniastuti, and Furkan, 2018). Past studies have revealed that the attitude of consumers can be influenced by celebrity endorsers because they are respected for

their physical prowess, acting ability and good looks (Hennayake, 2017). Another study conducted by Pratiwi, Riniastuti, and Furkan (2018) had found that celebrity endorsement had a positive and significant impact on purchase intention. Similarly, a study by Ahmad et al. (2019) had had similar results where celebrity endorsements through social media had a positive and significant relationship with customers intention to purchase. However, some past studies found that source respect did not have a positive and significant impact on purchasing intention of consumers (Taillon et al., 2019). Therefore, past studies have shown mixed results.

H4: Source respect of social media influencers has a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour of pet products by female consumers in Malaysia.

2.6 Relationship between Source Similarity and Purchasing Intention Behaviour

Another dimension specified in the TEARS model (Shimp, 2007) is source similarity. Source similarity refers to the extent to which the influencer possesses similarity or congruency with the followers or customers. The similarities encompass characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity (Shimp, 2007). As explained by Shimp (2007), it is an important ingredient when the followers are heterogeneous and there is a variety of products or services. Desphande & Stayman (1994) further stated that individuals are influenced when they trust other people who are similar or like them.

Past studies have generally revealed a positive association between source similarity and purchasing intention (Lou and Yuan, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2019; Prendergast et al., 2014). This is attributed to the familiarity, similarity, attractiveness as well as likeability of the influence that are important determinants of for marketing effectiveness of products and services (Ohanian, 1990). The study by Ahmad et al. (2019) revealed a positive a significant relationship between the similarity of celebrity endorsement in social media and brand image. This further influenced the consumers purchasing intention. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2018) also found there is a positive relationship between source similarity and trust in the endorsed brand. This subsequently impacted brand awareness and purchasing intention of consumers. Some studies have shown that sales and influence on products and services can be considered gender-sensitive.

The study by Prendergast et al. (2014) tested the homophily theory to find whether source similarity, which was gender in this study, is effective in influencing male and female customers. The study revealed that a male salesperson had a higher impact on purchasing intention than females. Past studies have also revealed that source similarity does not affect customers purchasing intention (Taillon et al., 2019). The study by Taillon et al. (2019) revealed that the similarity of an influencer had an insignificant relationship with the attitude of consumers and purchasing intention. Here again, past studies have revealed inconsistent results. The following hypothesis will test the relationship between source similarity and purchasing intention.

H5: Source similarity of social media influencers have a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour of pet products by female consumers in Malaysia.

The following conceptual framework was developed for testing.

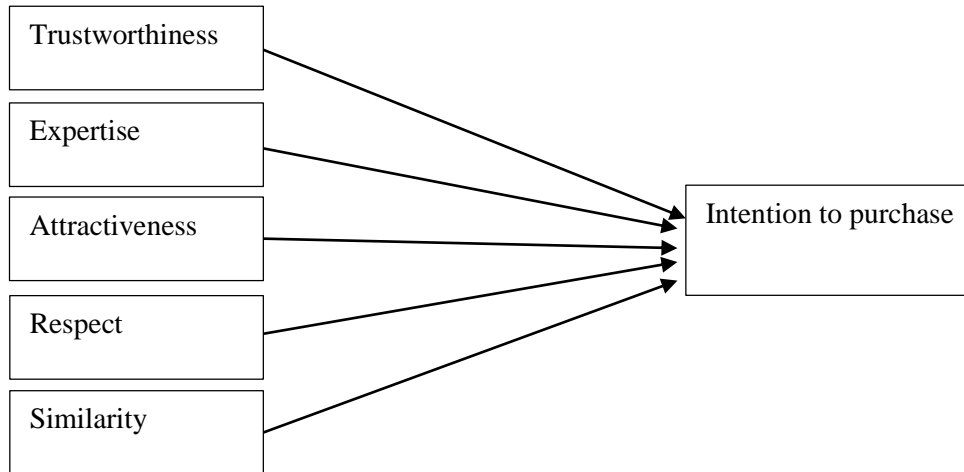


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

This study is based on the positivism philosophy as there is a single reality or truth and the knowledge is objective and measurable. In this study, an inductive approach was more suitable and based on theory, and hypotheses were developed and tested (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). This research is based on a quantitative methodological approach, and primary data was collected by using a survey approach. This was a cross-sectional study, and a snapshot of descriptive data and data to test the hypotheses was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Convenience sampling was found to be more appropriate, and the data were analyzed using the SPSS software tool.

3.1 Sampling and Instrumentation

In this study, sampling was done, and respondents were from the target population. The target population were female consumers of pet products in Malaysia. A qualifying question was included to ensure the respondents were qualified (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Nonprobability sampling was used, and the convenience sampling technique was more appropriate as a sampling frame of female consumers of pet products was not readily available (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). There is no specific rule on the sample size in quantitative studies, and there are several rules of thumb on the sample size. Minimum sample sizes in absolute numbers (Ns) were the first rules of thumb. For this study, the targeted sample size was 200 respondents. Scholars have stated that a sample size $N > 200$ offers adequate statistical power for data analysis (Hoe, 2008). Comrey and Lee (1992) further graded a factor analysis sample of 50 as very poor, 100 as poor, 200 as fair, 300 as good, 500 as very good, and 1000 as excellent.

3.2 Questionnaire and Instrumentation.

A self-administered questionnaire was used, and the questionnaires were divided into two sections. The first section was on the demographic information. The other section was to collect attitudinal and behavioural data based on a five-point Likert type scale. The questions were adapted from past studies. For the attractiveness construct, the questions were adapted from the study by Newell and Goldsmith (2001). The questions on the trustworthiness construct were also adapted from the study by Newell and Goldsmith (2001). For the expertise construct, the questions were adapted from Goldsmith et al. (1999). Questions to measure purchase intention were adapted from a scale developed by Duffett (2015). For the source respect construct, questions were adapted from studies by Samarasinghe (2018), Lima (2017) and

Widjaja (2015). For source similarity, the questions were adapted from a study by Bower and Landreth (2001).

4.0 Data Collection, Preparation, and Analysis

The target population were female consumers who purchase pet products, and data collection was done by using self-completed questionnaires by the qualified respondents. Data collection was done electronically as the pandemic situation did not allow for any face-to-face interaction. After a lapse of one month, only 125 completed questionnaires were received. After following up, there were 208 questionnaires that were good for analysis. The data was edited and coded before being tabulated to the SPSS software. Preliminary checking was done, and it was found that there were six outliers. For this study, the six outliers were removed. According to Kumar, Talib and Ramayah (2013), an outlier is not part of the population which may lead to biased results. Hence, this study removed the 6 outliers in order to get more accurate results. Further analysis by using the data from 202 questionnaires was done to generate descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.1 Respondents Characteristics

In this study, data from 202 respondents was used to generate descriptive statistics using the SPSS system. The demographic profile of the respondents encompasses their age group, highest education, level, marital status and income categories. The demographic profile shows that most of the respondents were in the age group of 20 to 31 years old. Most of them were in the income bracket of between RM2500 and RM4800. Based on marital status, most of the respondents (around 82%) were married. Based on education level, most of the respondents possess a degree qualification.

Table 1: Participant’s Demographics

Age Range	Count	Percentage
Below 20 years old	13	6.4
20-25 years old	75	37.1
26-31 years old	91	45.0
32-40 years old	15	7.4
Above 40 years old	8	4.0
Income Level	Count	Percentage
Less than RM2500	78	38.6
RM2501-RM4800	88	43.6
RM4,801 - RM10,000	31	15.3
More than RM10,000	5	2.5
Marital Status	Count	Percentage
Single	165	81.7
Married	37	18.3
Highest Education Level	Count	Percentage
Secondary and below	43	21.3
Diploma	34	16.8
Bachelor’s Degree	101	50.0
Post-Graduate	24	11.9

4.2 Normality Test and Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistic of the indicators and constructs, as shown in the table below, were measured with a 5-Likert type point scale. The descriptive statistics show the mean and standard deviation values of each construct, namely trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, similarity, and purchase intention. The mean score of all variables is above 3. The highest mean is expertise (3.8985), followed by trustworthiness (3.6906), attractiveness (3.5334), respect (3.3548), similarity (3.3069) and purchase intention (3.2277). The standard deviation is below one, and the highest standard deviation is source attractiveness with a score of 0.80022, while the lowest standard deviation is source trustworthiness with a score of 0.72678. Based on the low value of standard deviation, the data collected can be deemed as good for further analysis. The skewness and kurtosis measures are used to test the data distribution. As specified by George and Mallery (2010), for the normal distribution of data, the values of skewness and kurtosis should be between -2 to 2. As shown in the table below, all the skewness and kurtosis values are below 1. Therefore, the data distribution can be deemed as good.

Table 2: Normality and Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic				Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Trustworthiness	1.25	5.00	3.6906	.73948	-.353	.171	.489	.341
Expertise	1.25	5.00	3.8985	.72678	-.244	.171	-.155	.341
Attractiveness	1.00	5.00	3.5334	.80022	.043	.171	-.293	.341
Respect	1.00	5.00	3.3548	.79041	.067	.171	.126	.341
Similarity	1.00	5.00	3.3069	.78146	.035	.171	.235	.341
Purchase Intention	1.67	5.00	3.2277	.77614	.375	.171	-.084	.341

4.3 Data reliability testing

Reliability was tested based on the value of Cronbach Alpha which consists of an alpha coefficient value of between 0 and 1. As a Rule of Thumb, the score should exceed 0.7 (Pallant, 2011). The results, as shown in the table below, shows that all the Cronbach alpha value is above 0.7. This indicated that the reliability of consistency of data was not violated in this study

Table 3: Reliability Testing – Cronbach Alpha Values

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Source Trustworthiness	0.810
Source Expertise	0.777
Source Attractiveness	0.852
Source Respect	0.789
Source Similarity	0.776
Source Purchase Intention	0.739

4.4 Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Test

In order to test the strength of the relationship between the two or more quantitative variables, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test was used (Pallant, 2011). According to Pallant (2011), the Pearson Correlation values between -1 and +1 explained that the strength of the relationship between the variables. The table below shows that all the predictor variables had a positive and significant correlation with the dependant variable in this study. The source similarity had the strongest correlation with purchase intention ($r = 0.597$ and $p < 0.05$). Next was the correlation between source attractiveness and intention to purchase ($r = 0.566$ $p < 0.05$).

The correlation between source respect came third ($r=0.564$ $p<0.05$). The correlation between source trustworthiness intention to purchase was fourth ($r= 0.331$ $p<0.05$). Source expertise had the lowest correlation with the intention to purchase ($r= 0.244$ $p<0.05$).

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficients

		Trustworthiness	Expertise	Attractiveness	Respect	Similarity	Purchase Intention
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.613**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	.412**	.372**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
Respect	Pearson Correlation	.504**	.405**	.613**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000			
Similarity	Pearson Correlation	.361**	.370**	.503**	.664**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.331**	.244**	.566**	.564**	.597**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

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

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

In this study, multiple regression analysis was done to predict the value of the dependant variable based on the value of the predictor or independent variables (Pallant, 2011). In this study, multiple regression was used to determine whether purchasing intention can be predicted based on the source trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, respect and similarity. In addition, multiple regression was used to determine the overall fit of the model. The multiple regression also revealed the relative contribution of each independent variable in this study to the total variance explained. The model summary is shown in the table below.

Table 5: Model Summary/Fit

Item/Measure	Value
Multiple R	.684
R-square	.467
Adjusted R square	.454
Standard error of estimate	.57367
F Value	34.384
Sig	.000

This study R square value of .467 and Adjusted R-square value or coefficient of determination of .454 was considered moderate. This value revealed that the predictors in this study explained 46.7% of the variance that occurred in the dependant variable, namely intention to purchase (Field, 2009). The analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed an F-value of 34.384. The significance value related to the F-value is small ($\text{Sig} < 0.05$). The values revealed that the predictors in the model had a significant effect on the dependant variable, namely purchasing intention (Field, 2009). It was proven that the regression model was a good fit for the data.

Table 6: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized Coeff.		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.688	.258		2.666	.008
	Trustworthiness	.067	.074	.063	.895	.372
	Expertise	-.108	.072	-.101	-1.498	.136
	Attractiveness	.298	.066	.307	4.520	.000
	Respect	.143	.079	.146	1.801	.073
	Similarity	.358	.071	.360	5.055	.000

The direction of the relationship can be positive or negative, and the significance value (p-value) indicates whether the hypothesis is supported or otherwise. Based on the "Sig." column in the table above, only two independent variables, namely attractiveness and similarity, had a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship with the dependent variable that is the intention to purchase. The two predictors, namely attractiveness and similarity, had t-values exceeding 1.96 and a p-value less than 0.05. Therefore, only hypotheses H3 and H5 were supported (Field, 2009). The other three predictors, namely trustworthiness, expertise and source respect, had t-values lower than 1.96 and p-values higher than 0.05. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2 and H4 were rejected.

5.0 Discussion

The first hypothesis was to find out the relationship between the social media influencer's trustworthiness and intention to purchase among females. It was expected that when a customer trusts an influencer of a brand, the consumer will be more likely to purchase the brand. However, the results deviated. The results are similar to the findings by some past researchers (Lou and Yuan, 2018; Balabanis and Chatzopoulou, 2019). Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019) study also did not find a significant impact of influencers' trustworthiness on consumers' purchase intention. The deviation could be due to the ambivalent or sceptical beliefs of female consumers in Malaysia. The deviation could also be due to cultural differences.

The second hypothesis was to examine the relationship between social media influencers expertise and intention to purchase. Based on past studies, it was expected that the social media influencer's expertise that encompasses the influencer's experience, skill, knowledge, and qualification will impact consumers' intention to purchase. However, the results deviated from the results of some past studies (Chekima, Chekima, and Adis, 2020; Lou and Yuan, 2018). The results are in line with the outcomes of some past studies that also found an insignificant relationship between the source expertise and intention to purchase (Balabanis and Chatzopoulou, 2019; Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget, 2020). The study by Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) found that influencer endorsers were perceived as trustworthy, but no impact was found on the influencer's expertise. Similarly, the study by Weidmann and Mettenheim (2019) found that influencer expertise was not a significant predictor of purchasing intention. The deviation can be explained by the lower importance of expertise that is applicable towards purchasing pet products by females in Malaysia.

The third hypothesis was to examine the relationship between source attractiveness and intention to purchase. The results revealed that source attractiveness was a significant and positive predictor of purchasing intention. The findings of this study are in line with outcomes from previous studies (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Wiedmann and Mettenheim, 2019; Chekima, Chekima, and Adis, 2020). This means the social media influencers physical attractiveness that encompasses characteristics such as beauty, handsome, sexy, and elegant have an impact on

the purchasing intention by females in Malaysia. This result demonstrated that the social media influencer's attractiveness would affect female consumers purchase intention significantly in Malaysia.

The fourth hypothesis examined the influence of the social media influencer's respect towards purchase intention. This finding revealed that the social media influencer's respect was not a significant predictor of customers purchasing intention. The findings deviated from the results of several past studies that found a positive and significant relationship between the social media influencer's respect and customers intention to purchase (Hennayake, 2017; Pratiwi, Riniastuti, and Furkan, 2018). Some past studies also found that the social media influencer's respect did not have a positive and significant impact on purchasing intention of consumers (Taillon et al., 2019). This can be explained by the lower importance placed by female consumers on the social media influencer's respect.

The last hypothesis was to find out the relationship between the social media influencers similarity and purchasing intention by female consumers. The findings revealed a positive and significant impact of the social media influencers similarity on female consumers purchasing intention. In addition, the social media influencers similarity was the strongest predictor of consumers purchasing intention in this study. This means that the consumers who find the social media influencers that are more similar in lifestyle or age, such as the social media influencers who have pets, are more likely to influence the consumers' intention to purchase. The findings are similar to findings from several past studies that also revealed a positive association between source similarity and purchasing intention (Lou and Yuan, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2019; Prendergast et al., 2014). The similarity can increase trust in a product or service that further influences the consumers purchasing intention. The study by Lou and Yuan (2018) also found there is a positive relationship between source similarity and trust in the endorsed brand. The trust in the product or service will subsequently impact the brand awareness and purchasing intention of consumers.

6.0 Implications of Study

This study found that the social media influencers similarity and attractiveness were the two positive and significant predictors of consumers purchasing intention. The social media influencer's similarity was the strongest predictor of consumers purchasing intention. The other three predictors, namely source trustworthiness, expertise, and respect, did not significantly impact consumers' purchasing intention. There are practical and theoretical implications arising from this study. From the practical perspective, marketers and social media advertisers and managers should pay more attention to the influencer's similarity and attractiveness. The social media influencer's attractiveness and similarity should be evaluated. The social media influencers should have similarities to the consumers of pet products. This includes age and pet ownership. In addition, the influencers should show attractiveness to consumers through beauty, elegance and other attributes that increase their attractiveness. It should be noted that Malaysian culture and sceptical beliefs of female consumers in Malaysia does not place importance on the social media influencers trustworthiness, expertise, and respect. Other than the practical implications, there are also theoretical and academic implications. This study filled the existing gap in knowledge by examining the social media influencer's trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, similarity and respect towards the purchasing intention towards pet products among females. The results added some new insights, such as the positive impact of source attractiveness and similarity and the non-significance of source trustworthiness, expertise and respect.

7.0 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

There were here are some limitations to this study. This was a study that looked at five predictors, but due to reasons of parsimony, the effect of categorical variables such as age and ethnicity were not included. Future studies should include the effect of categorical variables to test the changes in the strength of the relationship between the predictors and the dependant variable. Secondly, there is the mediating role of other variables such as brand equity. The inclusion of mediators can provide more insights into the effect of the predictors on purchasing intention. Thirdly, this study only the purchasing intention of consumers. There is no examination of the consumers' actual action of purchasing. Future studies should examine the impact of social media influencers attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, respect and similarity on the actual purchase. It is possible that purchasing intention may not translate into actual purchase. The inclusion of actual purchases will help marketers and social media advertisers to implement social media strategies much more effectively.

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