Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intentions in the Fast Fashion Industry

Jing Foo Yee[1] ID **, Padmalini Singh[2]** ID **, Lay Hong Tan[3]** ID **, Jin Cong Yap[4]*, Xin Yuan Xiong[4], Zi Yang Xie[4], Quan Cheng Yao[4], Deepika V[2], Daisy Mui Hung Kee[4]** ID
[1]UCSI University, UCSI Heights, 1, Jl. UCSI, 56000 Wilayah Persekutuan, Malaysia
[2]BNM Institute of Technology, 12th Main Road, 27th Cross, India
[3]Technical University of Malaysia Malacca, Jl. Hang Tuah Jaya, Melaka, Malaysia
[4]Universiti Sains Malaysia, Jalan Universiti, 11700 Gelugor, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
*Corresponding Email: chongfamily0905@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has intensified the use of influencer marketing in the fast fashion industry, reshaping how consumers form purchase intentions. Despite its widespread application, empirical evidence on influencer effectiveness in the Malaysian fast fashion context remains limited. This study aims to examine the influence of key influencer attributes: trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity, on consumer purchase intention, using Padini Holdings Berhad as a case study. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 150 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the proposed relationships. The results indicate that the research model explains 74.8% of the variance in purchase intention (R^2 = 0.748). Familiarity of the influencer emerged as the strongest predictor (β = 0.414, $p < 0.01$), followed by expertise (β = 0.258, $p < 0.01$) and credibility (β = 0.218, $p < 0.05$). In contrast, trustworthiness showed a positive but statistically insignificant effect. These findings suggest that emotional connection, perceived knowledge, and credibility play a more critical role than trustworthiness in driving purchase intention within the fast fashion sector. Practically, the study highlights the importance of selecting influencers who are familiar, knowledgeable, and relatable to enhance marketing effectiveness.

Keywords: Credibility; Expertise; Familiarity; Influencer Marketing; Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has transformed consumer behavior, shifting interactions from physical retail environments to dynamic virtual platforms. With rapid technological advancements, businesses increasingly depend on electronic communication channels, particularly social media, to engage with potential customers. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have emerged as dominant spaces where fashion brands interact with consumers, moving away from traditional advertising toward personalized, influencer-led marketing campaigns that appeal to today's digital-savvy generation (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Lok et al., 2024). Influencers play a role in this transformation. They help brands build authentic and relatable connections with their audiences by producing content that aligns with the values, lifestyles, and aspirations of their followers. Studies have shown that consumers often perceive influencers as more credible and knowledgeable than traditional advertisements, thereby increasing their willingness to act on influencer recommendations (Kirkpatrick, 2016; Kee et al., 2022; Lou, 2021). Influencers have a unique ability to boost consumer engagement by showcasing products in realistic, trust-driven contexts.

This evolution has led to the rise of influencer marketing, a strategy that has become integral to brand positioning in the fast fashion industry. Fast fashion brands, which rely on speed, trend sensitivity, and visual appeal, benefit greatly from the timely and visually engaging content that influencers produce (Munaro et al., 2025). Influencer marketing not only strengthens brand awareness but also significantly impacts consumer decision-making processes and purchase intentions (Anwar et al., 2022; Freberg et al., 2010). Moreover, social media is increasingly recognized for its role in enhancing innovation performance, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Research by Teh and Kee (2021) revealed that social media facilitates open innovation and knowledge sharing, which are vital for organizations seeking to remain agile and competitive. Another study emphasized how leveraging social media contributes positively to business innovation outcomes by encouraging customer interaction, co-creation, and responsiveness to market trends (Teh et al., 2021). These findings are directly relevant to fast fashion brands that must continuously innovate to keep pace with ever-evolving consumer preferences.

The increasing popularity of platforms such as TikTok has further amplified this effect. According to Nair et al. (2022), businesses that embraced TikTok during the COVID-19 pandemic witnessed improved performance due to increased consumer interaction and brand exposure. Social media, thus, is not merely a communication tool but a critical driver of innovation and performance in the digital age. In fact, Lok et al. (2024) highlighted that social media platforms directly influence Malaysian consumers' perceptions and behaviors toward international fast-food brands such as McDonald's, reinforcing the role of social media in shaping consumption habits. With over 3.29 billion global social media users by 2022, marketers have increasingly prioritized social media as a core marketing channel (Appel et al., 2020). In Malaysia, this global trend is reflected in the retail strategies of local fashion brands such as Padini Holdings Berhad. As one of Malaysia's leading fashion retailers, Padini has begun leveraging influencer marketing to remain relevant and competitive in the fast fashion industry. Understanding how influencer marketing shapes consumer behavior in the local context is, therefore, essential for academic inquiry and practical implementation.

Padini Holdings Berhad is one of Malaysia's fashion retailers. It is known for its wide range of affordable and trendy clothing. Padini was founded in 1971. Padini successfully built a reputation for offering both casual and formal wear through its flagship brands like Padini, Vincci, and Seed. Operating in a highly competitive retail landscape, Padini

embodies the characteristics of a fast fashion brand by rapidly producing new styles in response to shifting consumer preferences and market trends. As one of the key players in the Malaysian fast fashion industry, Padini faces tremendous challenges in keeping up with the diverse consumer preferences and trends. Fast fashion is characterized by its ability to deliver new, trendy products to consumers at a rapid pace, while maintaining affordability. To stay competitive, Padini Holdings Berhad has started leveraging influencer marketing to stay competitive and appeal to younger consumers in a digital-first economy (Yusof et al., 2022). This helps Padini to boost brand engagement and stay relevant among younger, digital-first consumers. Padini, as a well-known Malaysian fashion brand, operates in a fast-paced and competitive retail industry. To keep up with trends and connect with younger shoppers, fast fashion brands like Padini must adapt quickly to what consumers want. One way to do this is by using digital marketing strategies that feel more personal and relatable to the audience.

Influencers help Padini spread trends quickly and get noticed by specific target groups (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). By working with influencers, Padini can show its latest styles in a way that feels real and inspiring, which helps consumers feel more connected to the brand. Influencer marketing is particularly important, especially in Malaysia, as the youth consumers are highly active on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Influencer marketing not only enhances brand image but also impacts consumers' purchase decisions and intention to buy, as consumers see influencers as experts and perceive expertise and credibility from them (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). As a result, Padini uses influencer marketing to support its fast fashion strategy. This approach helps the brand respond quickly to changing trends. It also creates demand through eye-catching content and a strong social media presence. These elements are important in today's fast-moving and highly connected market.

Influencer marketing plays an important role in shaping consumer behaviour in the fast fashion industry. The role of influencers is defined through several key factors that determine their effectiveness, which are trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity. Trustworthiness means that influencers are seen as honest and sincere. When consumers believe an influencer is trustworthy, they are more likely to follow their recommendations (Reichelt et al., 2014). A trustworthy influencer fosters stronger emotional connections with their audience, encouraging deeper brand loyalty and increasing the likelihood of purchase. Credibility involves how believable and persuasive an influencer is. In the context of fast fashion, credibility is essential, as consumers often seek endorsements that validate their own preferences. Influencers with high credibility have a proven track record of delivering accurate and trustworthy content. Recent studies suggest that consumers are more likely to trust influencers who have built a reputation over time, as their authority in a specific field boosts consumer confidence in their recommendations (Saima & Khan, 2020). Expertise is the influencer's knowledge or authority in a specific area, such as fashion. Consumers tend to trust influencers who are experts in the field, making them more likely to follow their advice (Schouten et al., 2019). Familiarity is how well consumers know or relate to the influencer. When consumers feel familiar with an influencer, they are more comfortable with their recommendations and are encouraged to make purchase decisions (Lim et al., 2017). Together, these traits increase consumer trust in influencers, which, in turn, enhances purchase intention. When consumers trust and relate to influencers, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand and ultimately purchase the product (Ki et al., 2020).

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the extent to which key influencer characteristics: trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity, influence consumer purchase intention in the fast fashion industry, using Padini Holdings Berhad as the

empirical context. The significance of this research lies in its focus on influencer-driven consumer decision-making within a Southeast Asian market, where empirical evidence remains limited despite the rapid growth of social media–based marketing strategies. This study offers novelty by integrating multiple influencer attributes into a single analytical framework and by empirically testing their relative influence on purchase intention in a Malaysian fast fashion setting, rather than assuming their effects are uniform across industries and cultural contexts. By identifying which influencer traits most strongly drive purchase intention, the study contributes to the literature by refining existing influencer marketing and source credibility theories within a digital retail environment. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for fast fashion brands seeking to optimize influencer selection and campaign design, thereby enhancing consumer engagement, strengthening brand positioning, and improving marketing effectiveness in an increasingly competitive and digitally driven marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Influencer Marketing
Influencer marketing refers to a strategic collaboration between brands and individuals who possess a strong online presence and the ability to influence the opinions and behaviours of their followers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing focuses on building trust through personalized recommendations and relatable content. This content is often shared on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Abidin, 2016). Influencers act as opinion leaders, and their endorsements can shape consumer attitudes and behaviours. This is especially true when their personal identity aligns with the brand's (Ki & Kim, 2019). Researchers have categorized influencers based on follower count, such as micro-influencers (10,000–100,000 followers) and macro-influencers (over 100,000 followers), with studies showing that micro-influencers often generate higher engagement rates due to perceived authenticity (Casaló et al., 2018). The effectiveness of influencer marketing also depends on several factors. These include trustworthiness, credibility, familiarity, and expertise, which are key in influencing consumer attitudes (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). These components will be the focus of this study, as they relate to how influencer marketing strengthens fast fashion brands like Padini Holdings Berhad.

Hypotheses Development
Trustworthiness
Trustworthiness is a crucial factor in influencer marketing, as it directly influences how consumers perceive the value of the information being shared by an influencer. Defined as the degree to which an influencer is perceived as honest, reliable, and credible, trustworthiness plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors (Erdogan, 1999). Consumers are more likely to believe and follow the recommendations of influencers they trust, which leads to higher engagement and increased purchase intention (Freberg et al., 2010). This trust is built over time through consistent, authentic, and transparent content, which fosters a genuine connection between the influencer and their followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). The relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention has been positive in a few studies. For instance, studies have shown that consumers who trust influencers are more likely to make a purchase based on the influencer's recommendation (De Veirman et al., 2017). For brands like Padini Holdings Berhad, working with trustworthy influencers can help strengthen their position in the competitive fast fashion market by creating more authentic and persuasive content (Casaló et al., 2018). This aligns with the concept that trust is a key driver of consumer purchase intention, as a trustworthy influencer can inspire greater confidence in a brand's products or services (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). In conclusion, trustworthiness is an essential component in influencer marketing that significantly impacts consumer

behavior. By collaborating with influencers who are perceived as trustworthy, brands like Padini can build stronger emotional connections with their audience and influence purchase decisions.

H1: Trustworthiness of influencers has a positive relationship with purchase intention in the fast fashion industry.

Credibility

Credibility is one of the most important factors that influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Defined as the perception of an influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and authority in a specific field, credibility plays a central role in shaping how consumers react to marketing messages (Ohanian, 1990). In the context of social media, an influencer's credibility is often determined by their knowledge and experience in the domain they represent, as well as their ability to provide valuable, relevant content to their audience (Choi & Lee, 2015). Consumers are more likely to trust and act on the recommendations of credible influencers, making credibility a vital element in driving consumer behaviour and purchase intention (Kaye & Johnson, 2003). When an influencer is regarded as credible, their followers are more likely to believe that the influencer has the expertise to provide relevant and accurate advice on fashion choices (Muntinga et al., 2011). This relationship between credibility and purchase intention is particularly crucial for brands like Padini Holdings Berhad, which rely on influencers to shape consumer preferences and drive sales in a highly competitive market (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Research indicates that the more credible an influencer is perceived to be, the more likely their followers will engage with their content and make purchasing decisions based on the influencer's endorsement (Kim & Ko, 2011).

H2: Credibility of influencers has a positive relationship with purchase intention in the fast fashion industry.

Expertise

In this case, expertise is the level to which an influencer is perceived to have the requisite knowledge, experience, or skill in a specific area, such as fashion. This trait greatly affects the audience's perception of the influencer's authority and how likely they are to follow the recommendations (Schouten et al., 2019). Influencers with high expertise in the fast fashion industry can lead the consumer choices by showing the capability to use and suggest styles, trends, and products that are relevant to the current fashion taste. Thus, followers are more likely to trust an influencer's product endorsements (Casaló et al., 2018) because of this perception of competence.

Furthermore, the Source Credibility Theory states that those expert sources are more persuasive and effective in altering attitudes or behavior (Ohanian, 1990). Expertise is proven to increase content relevance and authenticity, i.e., the two vital factors to create meaningful engagement and increase purchase intention (Ki et al., 2020). For Padini Holdings Berhad, partnering with fashion-savvy influencers lets the brand use their perceived authority to push seasonal collections, create styling content, and build the brand as trend-forward.

Expertise also leads to central route processing under the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 2012), where consumers thoughtfully evaluate the message, increasing the impact on decision-making. Consequently, influencers with high levels of expertise play a critical role in shaping consumer responses and building stronger consumer-brand relationships in fast fashion.

H3: Expertise of influencers has a positive relationship with purchase intention in the fast fashion industry.

Familiarity
Familiarity refers to the degree of a consumer's perceived social closeness and repeated exposure to an influencer. It strengthens (trust, comfort, and ultimately) the probability of purchase (Lim et al., 2017). For an influencer, familiarity is built day after day, and if you are absent, the community will note your absence. Influencers use it to form the basis of parasocial relationships, where audiences think they know the influencer, even if there is no physical interaction (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Familiarity with influencers for fast fashion brands such as Padini also helps reduce perceived risk of consumer decision-making, especially in fashion purchases where fit, style, and quality can be uncertain. Since familiar influencers make the product recommendations seem like a friend's recommendation rather than a corporate ad, authenticity and relatability are increased (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). According to studies, familiarity leads to higher message acceptance and purchase likelihood since people are more likely to trust recommendations from familiar sources (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Influencer familiarity not only helps recall a brand but also serves as a channel for emotional branding strategies that allow fast fashion brands to stay relevant in dynamic digital environments.

H4: Familiarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchase intention in the fast fashion industry.

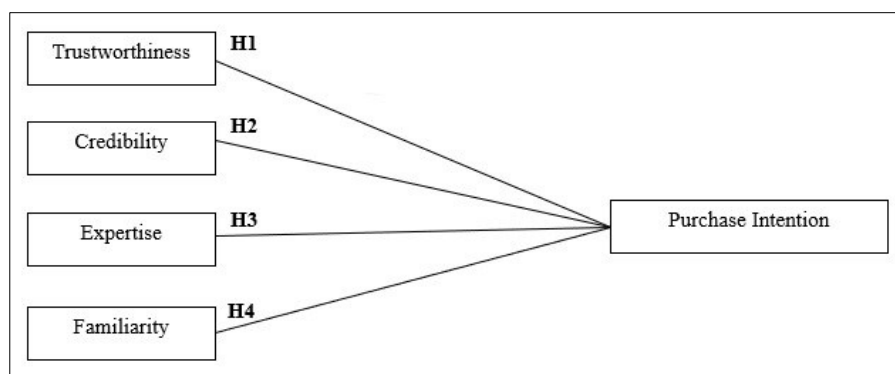### Purchase Intention in the Context of Influencer Marketing
The purchase intention is the consumer's readiness or likelihood to buy a product after being exposed to a marketing stimulus. This describes this type of stimulus for influencer marketing: content that influencers expose in this regard is greatly influenced by trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity (e.g., Ki et al. 2020). These influencer traits act as psychological cues to reduce uncertainty and give consumers more confidence to purchase, which in turn increases the consumer's intent to purchase.

Chopra et al. (2020) claim that influencer marketing directly impacts brand attitude, and it is a key indicator of consumer action in fast fashion. Social media posts are visual and storytelling in nature and therefore have emotional appeal and immediacy towards products that help close consumers' purchasing decisions. This is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that states that purchase intention is a strong predictor of actual buying behavior and is affected by attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991).

In Malaysian fashion, the influencer traits of brands such as Padini can be used to trigger consumer desires and increase conversion rates. Padini's ability to stay competitive, relevant, and top of mind with its target demographic is increased through the alignment of influencer content with the brand's image and audience expectations.

The conceptual framework of the study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and Procedure

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research designs to provide a comprehensive examination of influencer marketing in the fast fashion industry. The qualitative component employed inductive reasoning, drawing on preliminary observations and document analysis to contextualize the role of influencer marketing in strengthening fast fashion brands, particularly Padini Holdings Berhad. This exploratory phase informed the identification of key research issues, guided the literature review, and supported the formulation of research hypotheses.

The quantitative component constituted the core empirical phase of the study. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The survey link was distributed through widely used social media platforms, including Telegram, WhatsApp, and Instagram, to facilitate broad and convenient access for respondents. This digital data collection method enabled efficient participation, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire within a short time frame.

A total of 150 valid responses were obtained and included in the final analysis. The unit of analysis focused on consumers' perceptions of influencer marketing and its role in shaping purchase intentions toward fast fashion brands, with specific reference to Padini Holdings Berhad. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent profiles and overall response patterns, while appropriate inferential statistical techniques were applied to test the proposed hypotheses and examine relationships among variables.

Measures

A structured questionnaire was used to collect demographic information and to measure the study's dependent and independent variables. Demographic and personal data were gathered using single-item questions covering respondents' gender, age group, ethnicity, level of education, occupation, and level of familiarity with Padini Holdings Berhad. These items were included to establish respondent characteristics and to contextualize subsequent analyses.

The dependent variable, purchase intention, was measured using a four-item scale designed to capture respondents' likelihood of purchasing Padini products as influenced by influencer marketing activities. The items assessed the extent to which influencer promotions affect interest and buying intentions toward Padini fashion products. Sample statements included: "I am more likely to purchase Padini products after seeing influencers promote them," "Influencer marketing increases my interest in buying

Padini's fashion items," "I consider buying Padini products because of influencer recommendations," and "Influencers positively impact my decision to purchase from Padini."

The independent variables comprised four influencer-related attributes: trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity. A total of 16 measurement items were developed to operationalize these constructs. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed that all items loaded cleanly onto their respective factors, indicating satisfactory construct validity. Trustworthiness was measured using four items reflecting perceived honesty, sincerity, and reliability in influencer endorsements. Credibility was assessed through four items capturing perceived knowledgeability, informativeness, and believability of influencer content. Expertise was measured using four items related to understanding of fashion trends, styling knowledge, and experience in evaluating fashion products. Finally, familiarity was measured using four items reflecting frequency of exposure, following behavior, perceived personal connection, and recognition of influencers associated with Padini.

RESULTS

Table 1. Respondents Demographics (N=250)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	80	53.3
Male	70	46.7
Age Group		
18-24	82	54.7
25-34	26	17.3
35-44	23	15.3
45 and above	10	6.7
Below 18	9	6.0
Ethnicity		
Chinese	50	33.3
Indian	52	34.7
Malay	47	31.3
Singaporean	1	.7
Level of Education		
Degree or equivalent	92	61.3
Diploma or equivalent	21	14.0
High School	12	8.0
Master or equivalent	21	14.0
PhD or equivalent	4	2.7
Occupation		
Employed	28	18.7
Retired	4	2.7
Self-employed	26	17.3
Student	83	55.3
Unemployed	9	6.0
Are you familiar with Padini Holdings Berhad		
No	73	48.7
Yes	77	51.3

A total of 150 responses were collected, all of which were deemed valid for statistical analysis. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table

1. In terms of gender, the respondents were evenly split, with 53.3% female (80 respondents) and 46.7% male (70 respondents). When looking at age groups, the majority of respondents fell within the 18-24 age range, accounting for 54.7% (82 respondents). This was followed by the 25-34 age group at 17.3% (26 respondents), the 35-44 age group at 15.3% (23 respondents), the 45 and above age group at 6.7% (10 respondents), and the below 18 age group at 6.0% (9 respondents). Ethnically, the sample was diverse, with Indian respondents constituting 34.7% (52 respondents), followed by Chinese at 33.3% (50 respondents), Malay at 31.3% (47 respondents), and Singaporean at 0.7% (1 respondent). Educational attainment among the respondents was predominantly at the Degree or equivalent, representing 61.3% (92 respondents). This was followed by a Diploma or equivalent and also a Master's or equivalent, with both representing 14.0% (21 respondents), high school at 8.0% (12 respondents), and PhD or equivalent with 2.7% (4 respondents). For the occupation, students lead the most with 55.3% (83 respondents), followed by employed with 18.7% (28 respondents), self-employed with 17.3% (26 respondents), unemployed with 6.0% (9 respondents), and retired with 2.7% (4 respondents). 51.3% of the respondents are familiar with Padini Holdings Berhad (77 respondents), while 48.7% of them are not familiar with Padini Holdings Berhad (73 respondents).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, and Zero-order Correlations for All Study Variables

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Trustworthiness of Influencer	0.829				
2	Credibility of Influencer	0.847**	0.839			
3	Expertise of Influencer	0.792**	0.842**	0.809		
4	Familiarity of Influencer	0.749**	0.745**	0.729**	0.828	
5	Purchase Intention	0.753**	0.789**	0.786**	0.805**	0.839
	Number of Items	4	4	4	4	4
	Mean	3.7983	3.8367	3.7917	3.6733	3.7633
	Standard Deviation	0.78828	0.80892	0.79660	0.87131	0.83535

Note: N=150; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. The diagonal entries represent Cronbach's coefficient alpha

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and zero-order correlations for all study variables, including trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity of influencers, as well as purchase intention. The reliability analysis indicates strong internal consistency across all constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.809 to 0.839 for the independent variables and 0.839 for purchase intention, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 and confirming the reliability of the measurement scales. Each construct was measured using four items, further supporting scale consistency.

The descriptive statistics show that the mean values for all variables range from 3.6733 to 3.8367, indicating generally favorable perceptions among respondents regarding influencer characteristics and purchase intention. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.78828 to 0.87131, suggest moderate variability in responses, reflecting reasonable dispersion without excessive heterogeneity.

In addition, the correlation analysis reveals significant and positive relationships among all variables. Notably, purchase intention is strongly correlated with familiarity of influencer (r = 0.805, p < 0.01), credibility of influencer (r = 0.789, p < 0.01), expertise of

influencer (r = 0.786, p < 0.01), and trustworthiness of influencer (r = 0.753, p < 0.01). These results indicate that higher perceptions of influencer attributes are consistently associated with stronger purchase intention. Overall, the findings from Table 2 provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed relationships and justify the subsequent regression analysis examining the relative influence of these variables on purchase intention.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

	Purchase Intention (R^2 Change = 0.748)	Beta
1	Trustworthiness of Influencer	0.054
2	Credibility of Influencer	0.218*
3	Expertise of Influencer	0.258**
4	Familiarity of Influencer	0.414**

Note: N=150; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The regression analysis results are presented in Table 3, which elucidates the factors influencing purchase intention toward Padini Holdings Berhad. The findings indicate that the trustworthiness of influencers does not significantly affect purchase intention toward Padini's products. Accordingly, H1 is not supported, as trustworthiness exhibits a weak and statistically insignificant effect (β = 0.054, p > 0.05) on consumers' purchase intention. In contrast, influencer credibility, expertise, and familiarity demonstrate positive relationships with purchase intention, with beta coefficients of 0.218, 0.258, and 0.414, respectively. Thus, H2, H3, and H4 are supported. The model explains a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention (R^2 = 0.748), indicating that approximately 75% of the variation in purchase intention is accounted for by influencer credibility, expertise, and familiarity. These results identify these three attributes as the primary determinants of purchase intention in influencer marketing for Padini's products. Among them, influencer familiarity emerges as the most influential factor, exhibiting the highest beta value (β = 0.414), followed by expertise (β = 0.258) and credibility (β = 0.218).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how key influencer characteristics: trustworthiness, credibility, expertise, and familiarity, affect consumer purchase intention in Malaysia's fast fashion industry, using Padini Holdings Berhad as a case study. The regression results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that the proposed model explains a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention (R^2 = 0.748), indicating strong explanatory power. This finding suggests that influencer-related attributes collectively play a critical role in shaping consumer purchase decisions within the fast fashion context. The following discussion elaborates on each empirical finding by integrating relevant theories and prior empirical evidence, followed by theoretical and managerial implications.

Empirical Findings and Explanations
The regression analysis confirms that not all influencer characteristics exert equal influence on purchase intention. Specifically, the results indicate that trustworthiness does not have a statistically significant effect on purchase intention, whereas credibility, expertise, and familiarity positively and significantly influence consumers' intention to purchase fast fashion products promoted by influencers.

The non-significant effect of trustworthiness contradicts early foundational studies in persuasion and source credibility, which identified trustworthiness as a core determinant of persuasive effectiveness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). However, this finding is increasingly consistent with contemporary influencer marketing literature.

Audrezet et al. (2020) argue that modern consumers are highly aware of the commercial nature of influencer endorsements, which may lead them to question the sincerity of influencers' recommendations. As a result, trustworthiness may no longer function as a distinguishing factor, particularly in environments saturated with sponsored content. Lou and Yuan (2019) further suggest that parasocial relationships, characterized by emotional closeness and perceived intimacy, play a more influential role in driving purchase intention than trust alone. In addition, Jin et al. (2019) found that visual appeal and aspirational identity cues often outweigh traditional credibility dimensions in fashion-related contexts. Hudders et al. (2021) also highlight that excessive influencer endorsements can erode perceived authenticity, reducing the persuasive value of trustworthiness. Moreover, Casaló et al. (2018) and Sokolova & Kefi (2019) contend that in image-driven and low-risk product categories such as fashion, consumers prioritize expertise and relatability over trustworthiness, which tends to be more critical in high-risk domains like finance or healthcare. In line with Silvera and Austad (2004), this suggests that industry context moderates the relevance of trustworthiness, helping to explain its limited impact in this study.

In contrast, credibility emerged as a significant predictor of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.05$), supporting Erdogan's (1999) assertion that credibility is a central component of effective endorsement. This result indicates that consumers are more inclined to act on influencer recommendations when influencers are perceived as believable and reliable sources of information. In the fast fashion context, credibility may signal that influencers possess sufficient knowledge to evaluate product quality, trends, and suitability, thereby reducing consumers' perceived uncertainty.

Expertise was also found to significantly and positively influence purchase intention ($\beta = 0.258$, $p < 0.01$). This finding aligns with Sokolova and Kefi (2019), who argue that consumers rely heavily on influencers' specialized knowledge when forming evaluations of promoted products. Casaló et al. (2018) similarly demonstrated that influencers with domain-specific expertise are more persuasive, particularly in industries where trends, styling knowledge, and aesthetic judgment are central to consumer choice. In fast fashion, where consumers often seek guidance on styling, trend relevance, and outfit coordination, influencer expertise enhances informational value and strengthens persuasive impact.

Among all predictors, familiarity exerted the strongest influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.414$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting its dominant role in influencer effectiveness. This finding supports Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), who emphasized that relatability and repeated exposure foster emotional bonds between influencers and followers, especially among younger consumers. The result is also consistent with parasocial interaction theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956), which posits that frequent exposure leads to perceived intimacy and a sense of personal connection. Such familiarity increases consumers' receptiveness to influencer messages and enhances the likelihood of behavioral responses, including purchase intention. The prominence of familiarity suggests that emotional connection and perceived closeness may outweigh purely cognitive evaluations in fast fashion consumption decisions.

Theoretical Contributions
This study contributes to the literature by extending Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990) and the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) within a Southeast Asian fast fashion context. While traditional models emphasize trustworthiness as a universal driver of persuasion, the present findings challenge this assumption by demonstrating that trustworthiness does not significantly influence purchase intention in this setting. This suggests that the relevance of credibility dimensions is context-dependent and

moderated by industry characteristics, cultural norms, and the digital environment. By confirming the importance of credibility, expertise, and familiarity, this study refines existing theory and highlights the evolving nature of persuasive mechanisms in influencer-driven digital marketing.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings provide actionable insights for fast fashion brands such as Padini Holdings Berhad. The results suggest that brands should prioritize collaborations with influencers who demonstrate strong fashion expertise and credibility, while also maintaining long-term relationships that enhance familiarity and parasocial bonding. Rather than focusing solely on perceived trustworthiness, marketers may achieve greater impact by leveraging influencers who are knowledgeable, relatable, and consistently visible to their target audience. In this regard, micro- and niche influencers may offer advantages over celebrity influencers, as they often foster stronger engagement and perceived authenticity through closer interactions with followers (Marques et al., 2020).

Additionally, brands are encouraged to support influencers in creating value-added content, such as styling tutorials, product reviews, and trend forecasts, instead of relying exclusively on overtly promotional posts. Such content reinforces influencer expertise and deepens consumer–influencer relationships. Segmenting influencer campaigns based on demographic characteristics and platform preferences may further enhance effectiveness, as Malaysian consumers may respond differently across platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Finally, consistent with Hudders et al. (2021), brands should carefully manage endorsement frequency to avoid influencer saturation, rotating collaborators, and integrating organic storytelling to preserve authenticity and sustain consumer engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how social media influencer traits like trustworthiness, expertise, familiarity, and credibility affect consumer purchase intention toward the well-known Malaysian fast fashion brand, Padini Holdings Berhad.

The results reveal that among the four influencer traits, credibility, expertise, and familiarity have a significant and positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Among them, familiarity emerged as the most influential factor, suggesting that consumers are more likely to be influenced by those with whom they feel emotionally connected or frequently engage. Expertise and credibility also showed significant effects, indicating that consumers tend to trust influencers who appear professional and reliable. In contrast, trustworthiness did not significantly influence purchase intention. This contradicts previous studies that emphasized trustworthiness as a key persuasive factor (e.g., Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). One possible explanation is that in the fast fashion industry, consumers may prioritize style, visual appeal, and relatability over honesty or moral integrity.

These findings also have important implications for brand marketing management: brands should prioritize influencers who are not only professional and credible but also highly familiar to the target audience, in order to effectively enhance market response. The regression model used in this study demonstrated strong explanatory power, with an R² value of 0.748, indicating that influencer traits play a significant role in explaining consumer purchase intentions.

In conclusion, influencer marketing remains a powerful tool in the fast fashion industry. For brands like Padini, selecting social media influencers with high familiarity, expertise, and credibility can significantly boost consumer purchase intention and help build sustainable brand influence in the digital age.

LIMITATION

This study is subject to several limitations that provide meaningful directions for future research. First, the sample consists of 150 consumers from Malaysia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Southeast Asian markets or to older demographic groups. Future studies are encouraged to employ larger and more diverse samples across multiple countries to strengthen external validity. Second, the analysis focuses on only four influencer traits, leaving other potentially influential factors—such as physical attractiveness, message quality, and influencer–brand fit—unexamined. Incorporating these variables or adopting mixed-methods approaches, such as focus group discussions or in-depth interviews, could offer richer insights into consumer perceptions. In addition, this study does not account for platform-specific and content-related differences. The moderating effects of social media platforms (e.g., Instagram versus TikTok) and content formats (such as images, short videos, or live streams) remain unexplored, despite the role of platform algorithms in shaping user engagement. Longitudinal research designs could further enhance understanding by examining how these dynamics evolve over time. Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits conclusions to purchase intention measured at a single point in time. Future research could track actual purchasing behavior, brand loyalty, and repeat purchase patterns to assess longer-term effects. Finally, the growing presence of AI-generated influencers presents a new avenue for investigation, particularly regarding perceived expertise, familiarity, and authenticity. Comparative studies between human and virtual influencers may reveal important shifts in consumer trust and engagement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

Abidin, C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia, 161*(1), 86–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878x16665177

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Anwar, A., Kee, D. M. H., Salman, A., & Jabeen, G. (2022). Impact of COVID-19 social media news on employee behavior: The mediating role of psychological well-being and depression. *Asian Development and Educational Studies, 11*(1), 196–211. https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-07-2020-0159

Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *48*(1), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research, 117*, 557–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of Business Research, 117*, 510–519. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005

Choi, J., & Lee, Y. (2015). To what extent does 'flipping' make lessons effective in a multimedia production class? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 55*(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2015.1123105

Chopra, A., Avhad, R., & Jaju, S. (2020). Influence of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention: A study of Gen Z. *Journal of Content, Community & Communication, 11*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.31620/JCCC.12.20/04

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising, 36*(5), 798–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior, 68*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009

Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management, 15*(4), 291–314. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870379

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2010). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review, 37*(1), 90–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001

Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry, 19*(3), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049

Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 15*(4), 635–650. https://doi.org/10.1086/266350

Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The commercialization of social media stars: A literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers. *International Journal of Advertising, 40*(3), 327–375. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925

Hwang, K., & Zhang, Q. (2018). Influence of parasocial relationship between digital celebrities and their followers on followers' purchase and electronic word-of-mouth intentions, and persuasion knowledge. *Computers in Human Behavior, 87*, 155–173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.05.029

Jahn, B., & Kunz, W. (2012). How to transform consumers into fans of your brand. *Journal of Service Management, 23*(3), 344–361. https://doi.org/10.1108/09564231211248444

Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 37*(5), 567–579. https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2018-0375

Kaye, B. K., & Johnson, T. J. (2003). A Web for all reasons: Uses and gratifications of Internet components for political information. *Telematics and Informatics, 21*(3), 197–223. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0736-5853(03)00037-6

Kee, D. M. H., Al-Anesi, M. A. L., & Al-Anesi, S. A. L. (2022). Cyberbullying on social media under the influence of COVID-19. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22175

Ki, C. W. C., & Kim, Y. K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic. *Psychology & Marketing*, *36*(10), 905-922. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21244

Ki, C., Cuevas, L. M., Chong, S. M., & Lim, H. (2020). Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 55*, 102133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102133

Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2011). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research, 65*(10), 1480–1486. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.014

Kirkpatrick, D. (2016, March 31). *Micro-influencers have major impact on buying behavior: Study.* Marketing Dive*. https://www.marketingdive.com/news/micro-influencers-have-major-impact-on-buying-behavior-study/416579/

Lim, X. J., Radzol, A. M., Cheah, J. H., & Wong, M. W. (2017). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. *Asian Journal of Business Research, 7*(2), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.14707/ajbr.170035

Lok, Y. H., Jian, O. Z., Chaudhary, M. K., Azhar, N. A. B. K., Azizi, N. Z. B., Azman, N. A. B., …, & Kee, D. M. H. (2024). A case study: How social media influences consumer behavior towards McDonald's. *International Journal of Accounting & Finance in Asia Pacific, 7*(2), 102–115. https://doi.org/10.32535/ijafap.v7i2.3250

Lou, C. (2021). Social media influencers and followers: Theorization of a trans-parasocial relation and explication of its implications for influencer advertising. *Journal of Advertising, 51*(1), 4–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1880345

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of interactive Advertising*, *19*(1), 58-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Marques, S., Cardoso, P., & Palma dos Reis, A. (2020). The effectiveness of social media influencers in the fashion industry. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 24*(3), 407–426. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-10-2019-0212

Munaro, A. C., Barcelos, R. H., Maffezzolli, E. C. F., Rodrigues, J. P. S., & Paraiso, E. C. (2025). Influencer profiling: A comprehensive categorisation of social media influencers and their association with digital engagement. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2025.2500571

Muntinga, D. G., Moorman, M., & Smit, E. G. (2011). Introducing COBRAs: Exploring motivations for brand-related social media use. *International Journal of Advertising, 30*(1), 13–46. https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-1-013-046

Nair, R. K., Ganatra, V., Kee, D. M. H., Heng, S. W., Mei, H., Huang, C., & Doshi, V. (2022). How do social media platforms help to improve business performances during the COVID-19 pandemic? A study of TikTok. *Journal of the Community Development in Asia, 5*(1), 41–53. https://doi.org/10.32535/jcda.v5i1.1384

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising,* *19*(3), 39–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2012). *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Reichelt, J., Sievert, J., & Jacob, F. (2014). How credibility affects eWOM reading: The influences of expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity on utilitarian and social functions. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *20*(1-2), 65-81. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.797758

Saima, S., & Khan, M. A. (2020). Effect of social media influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention and the mediating role of credibility. *Journal of*

Promotion Management, 27(4), 503-523. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2020.1851847

Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2019). Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising, 39*(2), 258–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898

Silvera, D. H., & Austad, B. (2004). Factors predicting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement advertisements. *European Journal of Marketing, 38*(11/12), 1509–1526. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560410560218

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2019). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53*, 101742. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011

Sudha, M., & Sheena, K. (2017). Impact of influencers in consumer decision process: The fashion industry. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, *14*(3), 14-30.

Teh, S. S., & Kee, D. M. H. (2021). Social media and open innovation: implication for innovation performance among SMEs in Malaysia. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, *28*(1-2), 38-47. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBG.2021.118054

Teh, S. S., Kee, D. M. H., Zahra, M., & Paul, G. D. (2021). Tapping the power of social media on innovation performance. *GATR Global Journal of Business and Social Science Review, 9*(2), 143–151. https://doi.org/10.35609/gjbssr.2021.9.2(16)

Yusof, F., Arifain, S. M. K., Aziz, S., Suhaini, N., Malek, M. A. A., & Abidin, N. H. Z. (2022). Social support and psychological well-being among students in higher education institutions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *12*(11), 1443-1452. https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i11/15668

ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

1st Author
Dr Yee Jing Foo is a lecturer in the Department of Logistics Management at UCSI University. He holds a PhD in Technology, Operations and Logistics Management, along with a Master of Science and a Bachelor's degree. His research focuses on supply chain sustainability, digital technologies in supply chain and logistics, and the circular economy.
Email: yeejf@ucsiuniversity.edu.my
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8687-4918

2nd Author
Dr. Singh has a global outlook in teaching fostered by working in the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, with global ranking Professors from The Wharton School, London Business School, PennState and Michigan University. She has published impactful research papers in the area of social science and marketing in esteemed journals listed in Scopus and ABDC, and also has books to her credit.

She has organized many workshops, seminars, and National Conferences funded by SEBI-Multi Commodity Exchange-IPF, Indian Council for World Affairs, Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), National Commission for Women (NCW), and Department of Science and Technology (DST). She has 3 patents in her name in the emerging area of digital marketing.

She has completed funded projects from DST, ICSSR, and UBA in the field of social reengineering. She has been recognized by the Mahatma Gandhi National Council of

Rural Education, Hyderabad, for the Beat Covid Campaign. Dr. Singh is invited as a Panelist and Session Chair from various National & International Conferences on a regular basis.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3617-3774

3rd Author
Dr. Tan Lay Hong currently holds the position of Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Technology Management and Technopreneurship at Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), Malaysia. She completed her doctoral studies at the Faculty of Technology Management and Technoentrepreneurship at UTeM. Her fields of expertise include Service Marketing, Service Quality, Quality Management, Technology Management, and Sustainable Management. In addition to her academic pursuits, Dr. Tan has accumulated several years of lecturing experience at various colleges and prestigious universities. Additionally, Dr. Tan has gained extensive industrial experience, particularly in the food manufacturing sector. Her expertise in this domain demonstrated her practical knowledge of the industry and its associated challenges. This experience likely allows her to provide valuable insights into her students and enrich her teaching with real-world examples. Furthermore, Dr. Tan's involvement in government projects highlights her ability to engage in public-sector initiatives. By focusing on these projects, they are likely to gain a comprehensive understanding of government processes and the challenges and opportunities they present. This experience positions her as a well-rounded professional who can contribute not only to academia but also to broader societal development.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7544-1829

4th Author
Mr. Yap Jin Cong is a second-year undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor of Accounting degree at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

5th Author
Ms. Xiong Xin Yuan is a second-year undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor of Accounting degree at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

6th Author
Mr. Xie Zi Yang is a second-year undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor of Accounting degree at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

7th Author
Mr. Yao Quan Cheng is a second-year undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor of Accounting degree at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

8th Author
Ms. Deepika V is a first-year postgraduate student pursuing a Master of Business Administration at BNM Institute of Technology.

9th Author
Dr. Daisy Mui Hung Kee is an Associate Professor at the School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). She earned her Ph.D. from the University of South Australia and an MBA from USM. A prolific scholar with over 75 Web of Science and 113 Scopus-indexed publications, she also serves as the Country Director for AIBPM (Indonesia) and the STAR Scholars Network (USA)