

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on the Purchase Intentions of Working Adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The paper aims to explore the impact of social media influencers on purchase intention among working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. More precisely, it analyzes the influence of exposure to social media influencers, parasocial interaction, influencer credibility, and trust in forming consumers' intention to purchase influencer-endorsed products.

Methodology: Quantitative method was used for this study and a total of 351 respondents were surveyed through a structured questionnaire. The analysis showed that the variables of the research were all positively related to purchase intention. In addition, multiple regression analysis indicated that exposure; parasocial interaction, influencer credibility, and trust had a substantial influence on the purchase intention with the trust factor being the strongest one.

Findings: Besides, mediation analysis uncovered that the effect of exposure on purchase intention was mostly played out through trust, credibility, and parasocial interaction. The research findings suggest that influencer marketing works better when the influencer is considered trustworthy, credible, and relatable. The results offer significant insights to marketers, brands, and researchers for understanding consumer behavior in digital marketing environments.

Conclusion: The study concluded that social media influencers play a vital role in influencing the purchase intention of working adults in Kuala Lumpur. However, the authors emphasize that it is not the exposure to the influencer only that drives the effect. They claim that exposure becomes effective only when it leads to the feeling of trust, the perception of credibility and to a lesser extent, parasocial interaction. Out of all factors, trust in the influencer was the strongest determinant of purchase intention.

Keywords: Social media Influencers, Purchase intention, Trust, Influencer credibility, Parasocial interaction, Digital marketing.

Article History

Received:
June 12, 2026

Revised:
August 23, 2026

Accepted:
August 29, 2026

Online:
September 30, 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media are nowadays a big part of the people of urban Malaysia's daily life. Also Instagram Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become the main platforms for communication and entertainment. At the same time, these are the major spaces for advertisers and consumer influence besides communication and entertainment. Social media influencers have been a topic of focus for media and communication researchers especially because they are seen as modern opinion leaders who influence how audiences think, feel, and behave. Also, by posting lifestyle technology fashion, food, and personal experience content, they tend to be more relatable and personal than the traditional advertisement which can lead to the audience trust and authenticity perception being enhanced (Safdar et al., 2026; Safdar & Eman 2025). This is very relevant to the working adults of Kuala Lumpur because their busy routines could be the reason why they have less time to do a thorough comparison of goods before deciding to purchase. Consequently, influencer recommendation might be, for them, simply informational cues that, in turn, lead to purchase intention. From a media and communication viewpoint, this change should be studied because it depicts the ways in which persuasive communication has been changed from traditional mass advertising to the more personalized digital interaction. A quantitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the relationships among exposure, credibility, parasocial interaction, trust, and purchase intention to be measured systematically through numerical data (Ghanad, 2023).

The number of social media users among the Malaysian community is considered a new phenomenon, which has led to an increased usage of the internet. Adults are said to be engaged with social media through various platforms, including Facebook, websites, chat rooms, blogs, emails, and instant messaging services (Adzmi & Bahry, 2020). Social media has been an important digital platform for the Malaysian community, regardless of age. Everyone with a handphone will have at least one social media platform. Chandrasena & Ilankoon (2022) said that social media has become an important, inseparable part of young adults' lives with the rapid development of information and communication technology. Thus, this study will reveal the type of social media used by working adults.

Based on Ranawi, et al. (2019), today, the enhancement of social media platforms has developed the consumers' purchase intention. With social media, consumers can get information about a product or service, or even about other consumers' experiences, before they buy the product or service. Social media has been very convenient for the public to purchase a product or service more easily, with some reviews left on social media platforms. This is because consumers tend to adapt to new behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions through observing and imitating others. This study will dive into the purchase intention of working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, influenced by influencers on social media.

Che Wel, et al. (2024) Influencer marketing has become a key strategy for businesses aiming to influence users' purchase intentions in today's digital era. This study has examined the influencer impact, content quality, product or service characteristics, consumer individual factors, and the role of influencers in influencing consumer purchase intentions. This study will reveal if the influencer's persuasion really contributed to working adults' purchase intention.

A key finding shows attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, perceived risk, and pricing significantly and favourably affect customers' intentions to purchase online items and services (Ulfy et al., 2025). With these, this study will focus on social media, social media influencers, their credibility, parasocial interaction, and trust, which leads to purchase intention among working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In this way, it has been recognised that although previous research papers have examined influencer marketing and social media use, most of the research focuses on young adults and students rather than working adults. Limited quantitative research exists specifically in the Malaysian context, which reflects on analysing how influencer credibility, parasocial interaction, and trust combine to affect the purchasing intention of individuals. This particular study is going to address this gap through an emphasis on working adults and key factors in relation to influencers on social media.

The study based on the following objectives;

1. To determine the level of exposure to social media influencers and their association with purchase intention among working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2. To examine the effect of influencer credibility on the purchase intention of working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
3. To analyse the effect of parasocial interaction on the purchase intention among working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
4. To investigate the influence of trust in social media influencers on the purchase intention of working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
5. To identify the level of exposure to social media influencers and the influencer credibility, parasocial interaction, and trust among working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The literary value of this study was discussed due to the amount of quantitative evidence that it contributes to media and communications research by way of social media influencers and their ability to influence working adults in Kuala Lumpur to purchase. While conducting the initial literature review, it can be identified that this population had been neglected in previous sociological media and communications studies, which focused on Student populations. In regard to practical application, marketers would benefit from being aware of which influencer characteristics are most important for influencing the purchasing intent of consumers. Additionally, media practitioners can use the findings in creating more trustworthy influencer strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Baharin, et al. (2024) conducted a study on e-Shopping Behaviour: An Empirical Study of Malaysian Consumers. It is said that Malaysia's e-commerce industry has experienced rapid expansion, with online shopping becoming one of the most common digital activities. This paper looks at Malaysian consumers' online shopping behaviours from the perspective of three factors: information availability, social influence and trust. An online survey with 297 participants was used for data collection, and the data were analysed. The conclusion drawn from the study was that all the three factors, namely information availability, social influence, and trust had a positive effect on online shopping behaviour. Out of these, information availability was the most influential factor.

Mokhtar, et al. (2020) conducted research entitled " Online shopping behaviour of young adults in Malaysia: A closer look study mainly discusses the online shopping behaviour of young adults in Malaysia. It narrows down the topic to four main online shopping factors, i. e. convenience, customer satisfaction the perception of risk and price level. Data were from 106 respondents, collected through Google Form questionnaires. Findings showed that convenience, customer satisfaction, and price level positively influence online shopping behaviour, while perceived risk has a negative effect.

Muda, et al., (2016) studied the Online Purchase Behaviour of Generation Y in Malaysia. This study aims to examine the online purchase behaviour of Gen Y in Malaysia and identify the key factors influencing it. A total of 200 Gen Y respondents participated in the survey. Findings show that most Gen Y consumers purchase from online retailers operating through Facebook and Instagram. Among the four proposed factors, only perceived trust and perceived reputation have a significant positive effect on Gen Y's online purchase intention. Implications of these findings are discussed for both researchers and practitioners.

Ayob et al. (2024) examined The Influences of social media usage on online purchase intention among netizens in Malaysia. This study explores how various social media features such as community spirit helpfulness transparency, user engagement, and ease of use influence consumer's intent to buy online. Using purposive sampling, the authors held a survey study of 712 participants, and then, to process the

gathered data, they used the methods of Pearson correlation and multiple regression. Results show that being part of a community, getting useful information, and being with an open mind positively influence the intention to buy online. The paper sheds light on social media characteristics that can be improved to increase consumer interaction in Malaysia. Furthermore, it recommends that the next studies delve into particular user segments and bring in extra variables for more solid results. Mat Zin et al. (2024) studied, *Analysing Consumers' Online Shopping Behaviour Using Different Online Shopping Platforms: A Case Study in Malaysia*. The study was done to identify the factors influencing consumers' purchasing behaviour and determine whether differences exist between various platforms. Questionnaires were distributed and collected from 371 students and staff of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and analysed with the Pearson correlation coefficient, and an independent T-test was applied. The results revealed a positive relationship between web characteristics, external stimulus, affection, and cognition, showing these variables influence online shopping behaviour. Besides that, the findings also showed no differences in consumer behaviour patterns across different online shopping platforms. In conclusion, the researchers say that Malaysian businesses must have knowledge of the market for their goods and the demographics of the customers they are targeting before engaging in online commerce.

Lim, et al. (2016) analysed the factors affecting online shopping behaviour, focusing on the mediating role of purchase intention. Their research aimed to explore the relationships between subjective norm, perceived usefulness, purchase intention, and online shopping behaviour among university students in Malaysia. Data was collected through questionnaires from 662 respondents at Universiti Malaysia Perlis. Structural Equation Modelling was employed to examine the proposed relationships. Results indicated that both subjective norm and perceived usefulness positively affected purchase intention. However, subjective norm had an insignificant negative impact on actual shopping behaviour, and perceived usefulness showed no significant direct effect. Purchase intention, in contrast, significantly and positively influenced online shopping behaviour. The authors recommended that future research include working adults and additional variables for a more comprehensive understanding of online shopping behaviour.

Wang, et al. (2025) studied the Role of traditional vs social media on purchase intention: A sequential mediation model. This paper aims to study how traditional and social media influence in the fashion industry towards consumer purchase intention through nostalgia, perceived credibility, and persuasion knowledge. 391 responses were collected from fashion consumers aged 18–55, and data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS. The final result concluded that both traditional and social media make people feel nostalgic and see the message more credible, reduce their awareness of being persuaded, and increase their intention to buy. Using celebrities in traditional media is said to make the nostalgia effect stronger, but has little impact on social media. This study shows how marketers can understand how different media influence people's decisions.

Li, et al. (2025) examined how social media involvement affects consumer purchase intention on online social networking sites: examining the mediating role of self-disclosure. This research is done to investigate how social media involvement, for example, makes new friends, self-exhibition, and enjoyment, affects CPI on online SNS, and to examine the mediating role of self-disclosure in this relationship. This study was done using 520 questionnaire responses. The key findings show that consumers who actively engage and share personal information on SNS are more likely to develop stronger purchase intentions. The researchers concluded the importance of fostering interactive and engaging social media environments while emphasising the need for consumers to protect personal data.

Akar & Nasir (2015) discussed a review of the literature on consumers' online purchase intentions. This study aimed to identify the factors that have an impact on consumers' online purchase intentions through an in-depth analysis of the relevant literature. 100 articles were reviewed for this study, and key findings show that the impact of social media is generally underestimated in the literature. Meanwhile, most of the studies focus on the impact of consumer characteristics, merchant, and product characteristics on online purchase intention.

Sardar, et al. (2025) researched Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention: A Review and Research Agenda. This study consolidated prior studies by a systematic literature review (SLR) based. The review found major theories contexts influencer characteristics, and methods and also indicated that influencers are highly effective in changing consumer behavior.

Sarangapani, et al., (2023), discussed Factors Influencing Online Purchasing Intention in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The research was conducted in order to identify the factors that affect the decision to purchase online, particularly through the lens of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and perceived risk. A total of 384 respondents participated in an online survey and their responses were analysed using SPSS. According to the findings, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment all have a positive influence on the intention to make an online purchase, whereas perceived risk does not tell a story. Implications from the study indicate that marketers and online retailers need to work on usability, enjoyment, and utility as these seem to be important to customers, thus the findings provide good insights into ways of enhancing online consumer interactions.

Anuar et al. (2024) conducted research to explore the impact of perceived usefulness, ease of use price convenience, and trust on the intention to purchase online. It also took into account the differences between generations. 385 online respondents were surveyed. Purchase intention was significantly affected by all factors except price. The behaviour of Millennials was particularly affected by these factors. These results provide important information for the area of study as well as online retail operations.

Nagy, et al. (2021) researched consumer acceptance of the use of artificial intelligence in online shopping: evidence from Hungary. This study examined trust and adoption of AI-powered webshops. 439 Hungarian respondents were analysed. Findings indicated that the technology acceptance model (TAM) effectively explains AI acceptance, with trust identified as a key factor influencing consumer attitudes. Perceived usefulness was more influential than perceived ease of use in shaping attitudes and behavioural intentions.

Ramli, et al. (2022) examined The Influences between Customer Behaviors, Islamic Ethics toward Online Purchase Intention among Muslim Netizens in Malaysia. The purpose of this study was to analyse the factors that influence customer behaviour and Islamic beliefs in online purchase intention among Muslim netizens in Malaysia, namely perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and Islamic ethics. From 712 respondents were collected from Facebook using purposive sampling and a 5-point Likert scale. All three stated factors show positive influence, with Islamic ethics' attitudinal component being the most influential.

Shu, et al. (2024) researched Social Media Marketing in Shaping Consumers' Purchasing Behaviour in Malaysia. This paper examines how tailored ads, sponsorships from powerful people, user-generated content, brand interaction, and interactive campaigns can influence purchase intention and decision-making. The results suggest that trust, social proof and emotional engagement are major factors in determining purchase intentions, especially for the younger generation. Besides that, demographic and cultural elements also play a role in the effectiveness of the campaign. This research explains the way social media influences consumer awareness, brand loyalty, and buying behaviour. It provides useful information to marketers, digital strategists, and companies in Malaysia.

Poon, et al. (2024) researched The Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Online Purchase Intention. The study is conducted to explore the relationship between social media marketing and online purchase intention among Generation Y in Malaysia with three factors: interaction, entertainment, and electronic-Word-Of-Mouth (e-WOM). Data were collected from 239 respondents aged 29 to 41 through an online survey and analysed using SPSS. The final result revealed that all variables, interaction, entertainment, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) significantly influenced Generation Y's online purchase intentions, with entertainment showing the strongest effect.

Wiese (2025) investigated the Role of Social Media in Online Shopper Behavior: Insights from South Africa. This study aims to explore the impact of online informational influences (evidential, confirmational, and experiential), either user-generated content (participant or non-participant sharing) or via the brand social media pages, as drivers of online shopping loyalty behaviours, such as repurchase intent and social word-of-mouth (sWOM). An online survey was done with 433 South African adult online shoppers. The study shows that online influences do affect whether people repurchase, but some had negative effects. Researchers also found that when participants shared less, it led to lower social word-of-mouth (sWOM). Overall, it is concluded that a person's purchase intention or decision-making is influenced by others, too. So, an online image is very important for brands to look after.

Juhani, (2023) examined the Impact of Social Media Usage on Online Shopping Behavior in the Jordanian Community. The study aims to focus on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and trust. An online survey was done, and 600 respondents were collected and analysed using SPSS software. The final outcome reveals that all factors are positively correlated with online shopping. The research underscores the role of digital marketing and social media channels in making it easier and more convenient for buyers.

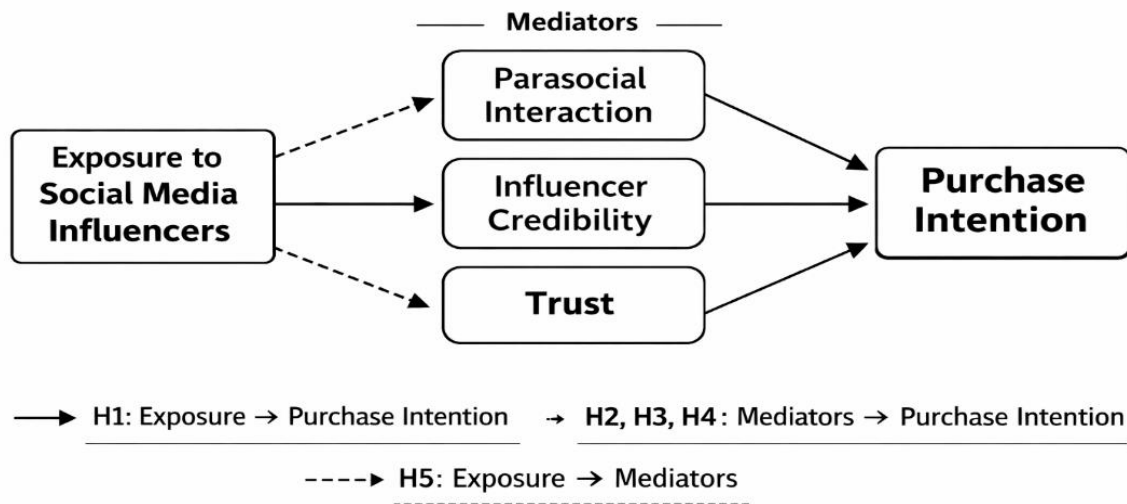
Ramli, et al. (2024) explored the Nexus between Social Media and Online Shopping: A Malaysian Consumer Perspective. The study aims to examine the relationship between social media attributes such as community sense, usefulness, openness, participation, and accessibility, and the propensity to make online purchases. 331 respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques to take part in the survey and analysed using Pearson Correlation. The finding shows a positive result between the social media characteristics and purchase intentions. The researchers also suggest that certain aspects should be improved to increase consumer interaction and purchase intention in Malaysia, by involving cultural and ethical factors to understand online consumer behaviour.

Hu, et al. (2022) studied Effects of Social Media Usage on Consumers' Purchase Intention in Social Commerce: A Cross-Cultural Empirical Analysis. The study was done to identify the roles of social media usage in arousing users' purchase intention on social commerce websites in a culturally diversified environment. Data was collected from 2,058 international students from 135 countries. In conclusion, people are likely to buy products by using social media, because it helps them to understand different cultures better. But it is said that if the cultural differences are too big, this effect becomes weaker. The researchers suggest that businesses should use social media to help people learn about other cultures, which can increase purchase intention and long-term business.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study examines how social media influencers affect the purchase intention of working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The theoretical framework mainly focuses on source credibility, parasocial interaction, and trust. The research is based on Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975), which states that consumer behavior is a result of intention, attitudes, and subjective norms. In this case, the influences of the source (influencers) including their credibility, attractiveness, and trustworthiness lead to changing consumer's belief and persuade them to buy the products that the influencer has endorsed. In addition, the research is linked with Social Influence Theory (SIT) by Herbert Kelman (1953) states that human attitudes and behaviors are formed through social interaction. Working adults who, through compliance, identification, and internalization, are the most probable to be influenced by the products promoted by the influencers, especially when the influencers are those whom followers see as being relatable, inspiring, and trustworthy. The figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The research adopted a quantitative approach. It focused on the extent to which social media influencers impacted the purchasing decisions of working adults residing in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A structured online questionnaire developed in Google Forms was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was shared via WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The survey was basically a set of closed-ended questions that corresponded to the research objectives. The authors managed to obtain 351 responses within the period of four weeks.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study target population was working adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia who use social media and are online consumers. The sample consisted of 351 respondents from various age groups, irrespective of gender or other demographic background. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who matched the study criteria, namely employed adults in Kuala Lumpur who are exposed to social media influencers.

3.3 Variables and Measurements

There were four independent variables in the research: exposure to social media influencers, influencer credibility, parasocial interaction, and trust. The dependent variable was purchase intention among working adults. Besides, control variables such as age, income level, product type, and time spent on social media were included to gain a deeper insight into the relationship between the primary variables.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Tools were created to measure the variables of the study and to verify the hypotheses. Here, the investigator relied chiefly on an online survey questionnaire as the means of data collection. Sharing of the survey link to the targeted respondents was done via WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and the survey was accessible for four weeks. Totally, 351 valid responses were gathered from the adult working population of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Most of the questions in the survey were closed-ended and directed towards fulfilling research objectives.

3.5 Reliability and Validity of the Tool

As a reliability measure, a Cronbach's Alpha test was done to determine the internal consistency of the research tool employed in this study (see table 1). Both validity and reliability are key elements in determining the rigor of research results. Validity is the degree to which a research accurately assesses what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is repeatability: when the measuring instrument yields the same results over multiple uses. If a high level of reliability is achieved, it means that the results are consistent and trustworthy. On the other hand, if a low level of reliability is found, one can question the accuracy of the data that has been collected.

Table 1: Reliability of the tools

Construct	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha	M	SD
Exposure to social media influencers	5	.970	3.46	1.13
Parasocial interaction	5	.974	3.34	1.19
Influencer credibility	5	.986	3.46	1.16
Trust in influencer	5	.984	3.47	1.15
Purchase intention	5	.980	3.45	1.16

The scales indicate a very high statistical strength. This serves as a support to the internal consistency of the questionnaire. On the other hand, such high alphas might also imply that some items are almost duplicates of each other, which is a point that a particularly strict journal reviewer may pick up on.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Data was obtained via a web survey administered to 351 participants. A 5-point Likert scale was used as the main measurement tool and the collected data was processed using SPSS. The first step of the analysis was encoding the data. This was followed by cleaning and screening activities. After that the researchers carried out descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis. Demographic and variable data were summarized by means of frequency percentage mean, and standard deviation. To check internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was implemented. Values above 0.70 represented a satisfactory level. Pearson correlation was the chosen method to explore the relationships between the variables of the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Privacy and confidentiality of the respondents were ensured by adhering to ethical standards. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary, and no personal or sensitive data were collected. The participants were also assured that their data would be kept confidential and only be used for academic purposes. The questionnaire was available in two languages, English and Malay, to ensure participants understood it. Also, the respondents were free to withdraw their participation at any time with no obligation

4. RESULTS

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 351)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	107	30.5
	Female	244	69.5
Age	18–27	73	20.8
	28–37	107	30.5
	38–47	121	34.5
	Above 48	50	14.2
	≤ RM2,000	35	10.0
Monthly income	RM2,000–RM3,999	52	14.8
	RM4,000–RM5,999	101	28.8
	RM6,000–RM7,999	122	34.8

	> RM8,000	41	11.7
Education level	Secondary school	75	21.4
	Diploma	73	20.8
	Bachelor	105	29.9
	Master	62	17.7
	PhD	36	10.3
Product usually purchased online	Cosmetic	51	14.5
	Fashion	81	23.1
	Electronic	53	15.1
	Food and beverage	40	11.4
	Health and wellness	46	13.1
	Household	51	14.5
	Services	28	8.0
	Others	1	0.3
Time spent on social media per day	< 2 hours	126	35.9
	2–4 hours	178	50.7
	> 4 hours	47	13.4
Main platform followed influencers on	Instagram	90	25.6
	TikTok	153	43.6
	YouTube	26	7.4
	Facebook	53	15.1
	Twitter	28	8.0
	Other	1	0.3

The table 2 shows the sample mainly consisted of female participants, who made up 69. 5% of the total. This indicates a higher representation of women than men in this study. The largest age group was 3847 years (34. 5%), followed very closely by 2837 years (30. 5%), showing that the sample was mainly composed of mature working adults. With regard to their digital habits, a majority of them indicated that they spent about 24 hours on social media daily (50. 7%). As for the platform of influencer-following, TikTok was the favorite with 43. 6% of respondents, very much affirming that these respondents were highly relevant for influencer marketing research.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics of Main Study Variables*

Variable	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
Exposure to social media influencers	3.46	1.13	1.00	5.00	-0.64	-0.49
Parasocial interaction	3.34	1.19	1.00	5.00	-0.44	-0.85
Influencer credibility	3.46	1.16	1.00	5.00	-0.60	-0.59
Trust in influencer	3.47	1.15	1.00	5.00	-0.66	-0.46
Purchase intention	3.45	1.16	1.00	5.00	-0.61	-0.58

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables. All variables recorded means above the midpoint of 3. 00, indicating that the respondents were generally more inclined toward agreement on all the constructs. The level of trust that a respondent had in an influencer was the highest mean (M = 3. 47), with exposure and credibility being next, though slightly further apart, while parasocial interaction had the lowest mean (M = 3. 34). Skewness and kurtosis values were in line with acceptable ranges, which suggests that the variables were roughly normally distributed for parametric analysis.

Table 4: Independent-Samples t-Test by Gender

Variable	Male (n = 107) M (SD)	Female (n = 244) M (SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
Exposure	3.16 (1.12)	3.59 (1.11)	-3.21	.002	-0.39
Parasocial interaction	2.98 (1.21)	3.50 (1.15)	-3.71	< .001	-0.45
Influencer credibility	3.20 (1.20)	3.58 (1.12)	-2.82	.005	-0.33
Trust in influencer	3.16 (1.17)	3.60 (1.12)	-3.27	.001	-0.39
Purchase intention	3.13 (1.20)	3.59 (1.11)	-3.40	.001	-0.40

According to the table 4, female respondents recorded a significantly higher score than male respondents on all five major study variables. The differences were statistically significant for exposure, parasocial interaction, influencer credibility, trust, and purchase intention, and p values were less than .01 in all these cases. Effect sizes were small to moderate, suggesting that although gender did not have a major influence, it was meaningful in the way participants perceived influencers and themselves in terms of purchase intentions.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA for Age Group Differences in Purchase Intention

Age group	n	M	SD
18–27	73	3.47	1.08
28–37	107	3.51	1.07
38–47	121	3.61	1.11
Above 48	50	2.93	1.42

ANOVA summary: $F(3, 347) = 4.34, p = .005, \eta^2 = .036$

The results in table 5 showed that purchase intention varied significantly among the different age groups. Individuals aged above 48 had the least purchase intention while those aged 38–47 had the highest average score. The effect size was small which means age made a statistically significant but practically limited impact on purchase intention. Tukey tests revealed that the Above 48 group had significant differences from the 18–27, 28–37, and 38–47 groups.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA for Monthly Income Differences in Purchase Intention

Monthly income	n	M	SD
≤ RM2,000	35	3.54	1.23
RM2,000–RM3,999	52	3.10	1.00
RM4,000–RM5,999	101	3.33	1.09
RM6,000–RM7,999	122	3.76	1.07
> RM8,000	41	3.21	1.49

ANOVA summary: $F(4, 346) = 4.31, p = .002, \eta^2 = .047$

One of the determinants that could explain purchase intentions of the respondents by far was monthly income. As the table 6 shows that the highest purchase intention was had by the group earning RM6,000 RM7,999 while the lowest mean score was recorded by RM2,000 RM3,999 group. With the p value being very low, the effect size is small and it means that income accounts for only a small part of the variation in purchase intention. Tukey tests showed that significant differences were found between the groups of RM6,000 RM7,999 and both RM2,000 RM3,999 and RM4,000 RM5,999.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA for Education Level Differences in Purchase Intention

Education level	n	M	SD
Secondary school	75	3.26	1.22
Diploma	73	3.35	1.08
Bachelor	105	3.43	1.11
Master	62	3.73	1.13

PhD	36	3.65	1.31
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ANOVA summary: $F(4, 346) = 1.89, p = .113, \eta^2 = .021$

Table 7 shows that there was no significant difference between the purchase intention and the education levels of respondents. Even though those respondents who had Masters and PhD degrees scored higher on average, the differences were not statistically significant. This implies that in this sample, the level of education was not a primary factor influencing purchase intention through an influencer.

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA for Product Category Differences in Purchase Intention

Product category	n	M	SD
Cosmetic	51	3.78	1.03
Fashion	81	3.74	1.06
Electronic	53	3.25	1.08
Food and beverage	40	3.49	0.84
Health and wellness	46	3.56	1.27
Household	51	2.96	1.30
Services	28	3.11	1.35
Others	1	2.20	—

ANOVA summary: $F(7, 343) = 3.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = .069$

Table 8 shows that purchase intention greatly depended on what type of products the respondents usually ordered online. Respondents who bought cosmetics and fashion items had the strongest purchase intention, whereas those buying household goods registered the lowest mean score. The effect size approached a moderate level, suggesting that product category had a more noticeable role than several other demographic variables. Tukey tests showed significant differences mainly between Cosmetic vs. Household and Fashion vs. Household. The “Others” category should be interpreted cautiously because it included only one respondent.

Table 9: One-Way ANOVA for Time Spent on Social Media Differences in Purchase Intention

Time spent per day	n	M	SD
< 2 hours	126	2.90	1.21
2–4 hours	178	3.73	1.06
> 4 hours	47	3.88	0.76

ANOVA summary: $F(2, 348) = 25.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .129$

Time spent on social media per day produced a highly significant difference in purchase intention. Respondents who spent more than 4 hours on social media had the highest purchase intention, while those spending less than 2 hours had the lowest. This was the strongest demographic effect observed (see table 9), with a moderate effect size, indicating that heavier social media use is strongly associated with stronger influencer-driven buying intentions. Tukey tests showed that the < 2 hours group differed significantly from both 2–4 hours and > 4 hours, while the latter two groups did not differ significantly from each other.

Table 10: One-Way ANOVA for Main Platform Differences in Purchase Intention

Main platform	n	M	SD
Instagram	90	3.69	1.06
TikTok	153	3.29	1.15
YouTube	26	3.85	0.80
Facebook	53	3.10	1.41
Twitter	28	3.90	0.96
Other	1	2.60	—

ANOVA summary: $F(5, 345) = 4.07, p = .001, \eta^2 = .056$

Purchase intention differed significantly according to the main platform respondents used to follow influencers. Table 10 shows that the Twitter and YouTube users showed the highest purchase intention, whereas Facebook users showed the lowest among the major platform groups. The effect size was small to moderate, indicating that platform choice had a meaningful influence on respondents' likelihood of buying influencer-endorsed products. Tukey tests showed significant differences mainly between Facebook and Instagram, and between Facebook and Twitter. The "Other" category should be interpreted very cautiously because it contained only one case.

Table 11: *Correlation Matrix of Main Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Exposure to social media influencers	—				
2. Parasocial interaction	.907	—			
3. Influencer credibility	.935	.944	—		
4. Trust in influencer	.918	.939	.964	—	
5. Purchase intention	.927	.916	.950	.968	—

Note. All correlations are positive and statistically significant at $p < .001$.

All core study variables were very strongly and positively correlated with one another (see table 11). Trust in influencer was found to be the strongest predictor of purchase intention with a correlation of $r = .968$, whereas influencer credibility came second with a correlation of $r = .950$, implying that trust-related perceptions play a key role in a consumer's decision to buy. Furthermore, the extremely high inter-correlations signal that the constructs may overlap, which is something that should be taken into account when addressing discriminant validity.

Table 12: *Multiple Regressions Predicting Purchase Intention*

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	-0.008	0.044	—	-0.17	.865
Exposure	0.089	0.038	.087	2.34	.020
Parasocial interaction	0.141	0.030	.145	4.65	< .001
Influencer credibility	0.220	0.043	.220	5.09	< .001
Trust in influencer	0.553	0.042	.548	13.28	< .001

Model summary: $R^2 = .953$, Adjusted $R^2 = .952$, $F(4, 346) = 1735.00$, $p < .001$

As shown in the table 12 that the regression model explained 95.3% of the variance in purchase intention, indicating extremely strong explanatory power. Among the different factors, trust in the influencer was identified as the strongest determinant of people's intention to buy products that were advertised by influencer. This was followed by the credibility of the influencer, parasocial interaction, and exposure. In other words, the results indicated that although all of the factors contributed to some extent, trust was the most important factor in influencing respondents' willingness to purchase products that were promoted by influencers.

Table 13: *Effect Size Summary for Demographic Group Comparisons on Purchase Intention*

Demographic variable	Test	Statistic	p	Effect size	Magnitude
Gender	Independent t-test	$t = -3.40$	.001	$d = 0.40$	Small to moderate
Age group	One-way ANOVA	$F = 4.34$	.005	$\eta^2 = .036$	Small
Monthly income	One-way ANOVA	$F = 4.31$	.002	$\eta^2 = .047$	Small
Education level	One-way ANOVA	$F = 1.89$	.113	$\eta^2 = .021$	Small, not significant
Product category	One-way ANOVA	$F = 3.63$	< .001	$\eta^2 = .069$	Small to moderate

Time spent on social media	One-way ANOVA	F = 25.88	< .001	$\eta^2 = .129$	Moderate
Main platform followed	One-way ANOVA	F = 4.07	.001	$\eta^2 = .056$	Small to moderate

Table 13 shows that the time spent in social networking is the demographic variable that most strongly influences purchase intention. Gender, product category, and platform also reveal meaningful differences, whereas education level is not significant. On the whole, the demographic effects are less than the psychological effects in the main model.

Table 14: *Single-Mediator Indirect Effects of Exposure on Purchase Intention*

Mediator tested separately	Indirect effect	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Parasocial interaction	0.401	0.263	0.548
Influencer credibility	0.639	0.450	0.824
Trust	0.702	0.574	0.833

Each mediator was tested separately and indirect paths still came out significant (see results of table 14). Again only trust brought about the biggest indirect effect. This finding returns the main line of reasoning that internal psychological changes lead to exposure becoming effective or not.

Table 15: *Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Exposure on Purchase Intention*

Effect type	Effect	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Interpretation
Direct effect	0.086	-0.072	0.237	Not significant after mediators
Total effect	0.952	—	—	Strong overall effect
Total indirect effect	0.866	—	—	Substantial mediation present

According to the table 15 results, exposure had a strong total effect on purchase intention. But when mediators were included, its direct effect was small. So the relationship mainly works through indirect psychological mechanisms. Simply put, exposure could raise purchase intention mainly because it helps build trust, credibility, and parasocial interaction.

Table 16: *Specific Indirect Effects of Exposure on Purchase Intention through Mediators*

Mediator	Indirect effect	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Result
Parasocial interaction	0.135	0.049	0.229	Significant
Influencer credibility	0.216	0.064	0.374	Significant
Trust	0.515	0.385	0.660	Significant

Table 16 shows that indirect effects of exposure on purchase intention. Because the 95% confidence intervals for indirect effects didn't go through zero, the three indirect effects were significant. As a mediator, trust can be considered the strongest, followed by credibility and parasocial interaction. These findings suggest that trust is the primary way through which influencer exposure affects buyers' intention.

Table 17: *Multicollinearity Diagnostics for Regression Model*

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Exposure	.099	10.14	High multicollinearity
Parasocial interaction	.142	7.04	Moderate to high multicollinearity
Influencer credibility	.074	13.56	Serious multicollinearity concern
Trust	.080	12.43	Serious multicollinearity concern

According to the table 17, the VIF values indicate that our predictors share a lot in common with one another. While the parameters of Credibility and Trust scored above the conventional cut-off point of 10, which suggests a significant multicollinearity concern. In other words, the regression coefficients must be interpreted cautiously because the constructs are very nearly identical statistically.

4.1 Findings

Respondents in the study found that they were exposed to social media influencers, parasocial interaction, influencer credibility, trust, and purchase intention at a moderately positive level. Of the primary concepts, trust in the influencer had the highest average score, then very close were influencer credibility and exposure, and the level of parasocial interaction was somewhat lower. The overall descriptive pattern indicates that the working adults of Kuala Lumpur usually have a positive reaction to influencer content and are fairly receptive to making purchase decisions influenced by the influencer.

Reliability testing confirmed that each construct had very excellent internal consistencies, the measurement scales therefore were able to accurately capture the intended content. Moreover, correlation analysis demonstrated that purchase intention was positively and strongly correlated with all major variables. The highest two-variable correlation was between trust and purchase intention, then credibility and purchase intention, which means that purchase intention is mostly influenced by the perceptions of followers about influencer trustworthiness and dependability.

According to the regression results exposure parasocial interaction, credibility, and trust were all significantly associated with purchase intention. However, among them, trust was identified as the strongest and most independent predictor. This finding was further validated by the mediation analysis, which revealed that the influence of exposure on purchase intention was mostly exerted through the mechanisms of trust, credibility, and parasocial interaction, among which trust had the greatest indirect effect. In other words, exposure by itself did not lead to the intention to purchase; instead, exposure became effective when it was changed into trust and credibility.

The demographic analyses also brought about very meaningful patterns. Female respondents expressed significantly more willingness to buy compared to male respondents. There were also substantial group differences in age income product category, time spent on social media, and main platform used to follow influencers. Time spent on social media was the most powerful demographic factor, as it indicated that people who used social media more extensively were far more likely to say that they strongly intended to buy as a result of seeing an influencer.

Meanwhile, two technical warnings came up. Initially, the multicollinearity statisticians revealed that quite a few predictors were largely the same. Plus, the common-method-bias examination indicated that the links could be exaggerated by the utilization of a one-time self-report survey. Such concerns don't disprove the results, yet they tell us that the things we found should be viewed as powerful correlations and not as undeniable evidences of causal influences.

5. DISCUSSION

The present findings align with the latest studies on influencer-marketing which indicate that trust and credibility are the primary ways through which influencer exposure leads to purchase intention. Past research has revealed that influencer characteristics like being an expert, authentic, and relatable are major factors in developing trust, which subsequently increases purchase intention and helps consumer decision-making. This time, trust not only had a big positive connection with purchase intention but was also the most powerful variable in the regression model, hence further supporting the notion that the marketing power of an influencer lies more in a perception of trustworthiness than just exposure (Sokolova & Kefi, 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024).

The evidence gathered extends and strengthens the existing research which points out the importance of parasocial interaction in influencer marketing. Parasocial relationships lead to feelings of emotional proximity between the followers and the influencers, and this may lead to changes in attitudes and behavioral intentions. According to this study, parasocial interaction is the main factor that purchase intention depends on. It is also the mechanism through which parasocial interaction leads to purchase intention. Nevertheless, its influence was quite weak compared to trust and credibility which

demonstrates that emotional connection without the cognitive assessment of trustworthiness and reliability is not enough (Su et al., 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2022; Lestari & Yopiannor, 2025).

The significant influence of influencer credibility found in this research corresponds to earlier studies that emphasize the role of information quality, expertise, and authenticity in altering consumer perceptions as points of preferentiality. Even after accounting for variables such as exposure and parasocial interaction, credibility continues to be a major factor driving purchase intention. This implies that consumers do not simply take influencer posts at face value but critically assess them, and influencers who are deemed credible have a higher chance of turning the audience's attention into a buying act. Hence, credibility acts as a connecting element between being aware of a product and the intention to buy it (Bhardwaj et al., 2020; ElSayed, 2024; Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Mediation analysis leads to theoretical implications by showing that the impact of exposure on the intention to purchase is heavily indirect. Exposure does not lead to purchase intention directly but instead, it is mediated via psychological processes such as trust, credibility, and parasocial interaction. This result is in line with recent work which interprets influencer marketing as a process-driven phenomenon, where internal psychological changes serve as the links between marketing stimuli and consumer actions. The fading of the direct effect when mediators are introduced indicates that exposure by itself cannot achieve anything unless it results in significant perceptions (Duan & Brechman, 2025; Sarkis et al., 2024).

Also, the demographic results help to deepen the understanding of differences in purchase intention among various groups of consumers. For instance, the strongest impact came from the time spent on social media, meaning that the more active users are the ones who get influenced by the persuading of the influencers the most. This is in line with the latest research showing that more interaction on social media leads to more frequent exposure to the content, more emotional involvement, and more trust thus, increase in purchase intention. Besides that, the study revealed differences between platforms which means that the power of influencer marketing might change according to different social media platforms since a difference in content format and user interaction patterns may exist (de Silva et al., 2024; Kwakye et al., 2024; Lestari & Islami, 2024).

Even though there are very strong empirical relationships the paper also captures some of the methodological issues that have been identified in the very recent literature. The extremely high correlations with each other among the constructs point to a possible overlap between variables like trust and credibility, which casts doubt on discriminant validity. In addition, the single cross-sectional self-report survey is the source of Method bias which generally makes the relationships found/observed a little stronger than they really are. Recent studies advise treating these problems with more advanced methods like confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and multi-source data collection in order to improve the robustness and generalizability (Sarkis et al., 2024; Ananda et al., 2025)

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The present research makes a significant contribution to the theory of media and communication because it empirically expands the current frameworks in the environment of social media influencer marketing. The results offer powerful evidence to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as they prove that exposure to social media influencers does influence the attitudes and behavioural intentions of consumers to a significant extent. The credibility and trust of the influencer is an attitudinal aspect that has a direct effect on the purchase intention, and this supports the assumption made in TRA that positive attitudes result in intentional behaviour. The findings indicate that influencers are persuasive agents of society who influence beliefs and evaluative judgments on the digital platform.

The research contributes to the development of the Social Influence Theory (SIT) by empirically confirming the processes of identification and internalisation in the relations between the influencers and the audience. The close relationship between exposure and parasocial interaction implies that frequent engagement with the influencers leads to psychological identification, according to which consumers

make the views and recommendations of the influencers their own thoughts. This internalisation process is also reinforced by perceived credibility and trust, and this provides SIT with the argument that influence is best exerted when the source is perceived to be credible and relatable.

The study also contributes to the Parasocial Interaction Theory, as it illustrates that this theory remains relevant in the modern context of social media. The results indicate that parasocial relationships are not just affective, but there are concrete behavioural consequences, which in this case is purchase intention. Overall, the study expands the classical theories of media into a more interactive digital reality, revealing how communication through influencers is transforming persuasion and consumer behaviour in the new media ecosystems.

5.1 Practical Implications

5.1.1 Media Industry

The results of the given study point to the increasing strategic significance of social media influencers in the media and advertising industry. Influencer marketing is no longer a promotional tool that should be considered as an addition to the main communication channel. Media agencies and practitioners that are aimed at working adults must focus on prolonged exposure of influencers to enhance engagement with the audience and brand performance. It is important to consider influencers according to credibility, knowledge, and aspirations of the audience, not just the number of followers, which will help boost a campaign to a higher level. The findings also indicate that brands and influencers can have a longer duration of collaboration to produce better parasocial relationships, trust, and eventually higher purchase intention by professional consumers.

5.1.2 Policy or Content Strategy Implications

In policy and content strategy terms, the results highlight how it is necessary to have transparent and ethical influencer practices. All regulatory authorities and platforms need to have explicit presentation of sponsored material to ensure that audiences trust them. The content strategies are to work around authenticity, regularity, and value-based messaging to build credibility and parasocial interaction. The influencers must include the promotion of products in the informative or experience-based content rather than blatant advertising. In the case of brands, influencer selection and audience segmentation must be based on the data to maximise the levels of trust and minimise the levels of scepticism among consumers. This may facilitate sensible influencer marketing and retain long-term consumer trust and interest.

6. CONCLUSION

The result of the research sees social media influencers play a vital role in influencing the purchase intention of working adults in Kuala Lumpur. However, the authors emphasize that it is not the exposure to the influencer only that drives the effect. They claim that exposure becomes effective only when it leads to the feeling of trust, the perception of credibility and to a lesser extent, parasocial interaction. Out of all factors, trust in the influencer was the strongest determinant of purchase intention. Having said this, the authors believe that their study has theoretically explained the way influencer marketing impacts buyers which is in a psychological persuasion manner, rather than the frequency of contact only. They argue that consumers' likelihood of intending to buy products endorsed by influencers is higher when they perceive the influencer as authentic, credible, and trustworthy. This leads to relationship-oriented marketing becoming more important in comparison to pure visibility-based promotion. Practically speaking, the results show that companies should not measure influencer campaigns merely by the number of people reached, impressions, or follower counts. Marketers, on the other hand, should focus on influencers who are capable of producing consistent, trustworthy, and consumer-oriented communication. Besides, this becomes particularly significant on platforms where users allocate more time and become more deeply engaged with influencer content.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declared NO conflict of interest.

Funding Source

The authors received NO funding to conduct this study.

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