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Influencing factors and consumer purchase intention through online platform in Malaysia cosmetics industry

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions within Malaysia's cosmetics industry. It focuses on four key independent variables: social media advertising, brand familiarity, influencer credibility, and the trustworthiness of social media platforms. Through a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 385 social media users using a structured survey. The findings reveal that all four factors significantly influence purchase intentions, with influencer credibility demonstrating the strongest impact. These results highlight the importance of strategic social media marketing in shaping consumer behavior, emphasizing the need for targeted advertising, brand engagement, credible influencers, and trustworthy platforms. The research provides actionable insights for cosmetic brands aiming to enhance their digital marketing strategies. By addressing the dynamics of consumer trust, advertising effectiveness, and brand familiarity, the study offers practical recommendations to drive purchase intentions in an increasingly competitive digital marketplace. This work contributes to the academic understanding of social media marketing and offers a robust framework for future studies in the cosmetics and broader digital marketing sectors.

Keywords: Brand familiarity, Consumer behavior, Consumers' purchase intention, Influencer credibility, Social media advertising, Trustworthiness.

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1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly reshaped consumer behavior, with substantial effects observed in Malaysia [1]. Social media platforms, initially designed for communication, have evolved into powerful marketing tools, enabling businesses to connect directly with their target audiences [2]. In Malaysia's cosmetics industry, where visual appeal and personal endorsements are vital, social media marketing has emerged as a key strategy for shaping consumer purchase intentions. These platforms allow brands to influence how consumers plan and anticipate purchases, bridging the gap between engagement and intention. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have revolutionized how Malaysian brands connect with their target audiences [3]. Despite this, the effectiveness of social media advertising is often hindered by a lack of understanding regarding the optimal design, quality, and placement of advertisements to resonate with Malaysian consumers [4]. This research aims to identify the advertising elements that most significantly impact consumer engagement and purchase intentions in Malaysia's digital marketplace.

Moreover, building brand familiarity and trust is increasingly difficult in Malaysia's saturated digital landscape. While global studies recognize the importance of brand recognition in influencing purchasing decisions, research tailored to Malaysian consumer behaviors remains scarce [5]. This study seeks to explore strategies for enhancing brand familiarity in a market where consumers are inundated with choices and have limited long-term brand loyalty. The credibility of influencers further complicates this landscape. Malaysian consumers are becoming more discerning, with many questioning the authenticity of influencer endorsements, which can dilute their effectiveness in shaping purchase intentions. This research will examine the true impact of influencer credibility and identify methods to strengthen trust between influencers and their audiences.

Finally, the trustworthiness of social media platforms is a critical factor influencing Malaysian consumer engagement [6]. In an era where concerns about data privacy and misinformation are prevalent, the perceived security and reliability of a platform significantly affect consumer willingness to interact with advertisements and make purchases. This study will investigate how the trustworthiness of social media platforms shapes consumer purchase intentions and propose actionable recommendations for brands operating in Malaysia. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide comprehensive insights into the key drivers of consumer purchase intentions in Malaysia's cosmetics industry. The findings will help brands optimize their social media marketing strategies, build stronger connections with consumers, and gain a competitive edge in an increasingly digital marketplace.

This research makes a substantial contribution to academic literature by applying and testing the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in the context of social media marketing within Malaysia's cosmetics industry. By examining how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence consumer purchase intentions, this study extends the applicability of TRA to the digital marketing landscape. It provides a contemporary evaluation of the theory, highlighting its relevance and adaptability in explaining consumer behaviors in social media-driven environments. This research also holds substantial practical significance for marketing professionals, cosmetic brands, and social media strategists operating in Malaysia's dynamic market. By examining the influence of social media advertising, brand familiarity, influencer credibility, and trustworthiness of social media platforms on consumer purchase intentions, the study offers actionable insights that brands can utilize to refine their digital marketing strategies [7].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has emerged as a transformative force in the digital economy, enabling brands to establish more personalized connections with consumers [8]. It involves leveraging platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram to promote products, services, or brands. Social media marketing profoundly shapes consumer purchase intentions by leveraging user-generated content and promoting the sharing of experiences [9]. A major advantage of social media marketing is its ability to foster real-time consumer engagement. Social media provides marketers with unparalleled opportunities to build relationships through timely and targeted content [8]. This authentic interaction enhances consumer trust and loyalty, setting social media apart from traditional media channels [8]. Additionally, it offers a wealth of consumer data that can be harnessed to craft tailored and impactful marketing campaigns.

Social media also amplifies advertising effectiveness, utilizing principles like the "mere-exposure effect," which suggests that repeated exposure to advertisements increases their impact [10]. For example, platforms such as YouTube and Instagram extend the reach of campaigns, as seen with early releases of Super Bowl ads that generate heightened viewer engagement without diminishing their appeal during the main event [11]. In summary, social media marketing has revolutionized brand-consumer relationships by fostering engagement, enabling data-driven strategies, and amplifying cross-platform visibility [2]. These elements collectively make social media marketing a pivotal tool for driving consumer behavior and purchase intentions.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), formulated by Fishbein and Ajzen in the 1970s, offers a robust psychological framework designed to elucidate the mechanisms through which attitudes and subjective norms influence an individual's behavioral intentions and subsequent actions. The core principle of TRA is that behavior is directly influenced by behavioral intentions, which are shaped by two key factors: attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms [12].

Within the context of this study, attitudes represent consumers' positive or negative evaluations regarding the act of purchasing products influenced by social media marketing efforts. These attitudes are shaped by consumers' beliefs about the likely outcomes of their purchase decisions and their value judgments concerning these outcomes. For instance, exposure to

effective social media advertising might lead to the belief that the products advertised will enhance one's lifestyle, fostering a positive attitude toward purchasing them [8]. This segment of TRA is particularly crucial in dissecting how targeted content on social media platforms can mold consumer attitudes towards products, thereby influencing their buying behavior.

Research consistently demonstrates the significant impact of social media advertising on consumer purchase intentions. A study by Yeo et al. [13] underscores how tailored social media advertising campaigns significantly bolster consumers' inclination to purchase by enhancing advertisement interactivity, trust, information quality, and brand image [13]. These elements contribute to a more engaging and persuasive advertising experience, increasing the likelihood of converting viewers into buyers. Further, the work by Karunarathne and Thilini [14] emphasizes the role of advertising value constructs, such as entertainment and informativeness, which are pivotal in capturing consumer attention and fostering positive brand associations [14]. By providing value beyond mere product promotion, social media advertisements can effectively augment consumers' emotional and cognitive engagement with the brand, thus elevating purchase intentions.

In a more nuanced exploration, Tariq et al. [15] reveal how social media advertising influences consumer behavior through sequential mediation effects involving brand preference and brand image [15]. This study suggests that effective social media advertising not only directly impacts purchase intentions but it also indirectly shapes consumer decisions through enhanced perceptions of the brand's value and desirability. Lastly, the comprehensive literature review by Shubhangam et al. [16] integrates various findings, reinforcing the consensus that effective social media advertising has a crucial role in driving consumer purchase decisions by leveraging information richness and emotional appeal [16]. This body of work collectively illustrates that well-executed social media advertisements are pivotal in shaping consumer purchase behaviors.

H₁: Social Media Advertising Affects Consumers' Purchase Intention

Brand familiarity has long been recognized as a critical factor in shaping consumer behavior, particularly when it comes to purchase intentions. According to Augusta et al. [17], brand familiarity significantly influences purchase intention by reducing perceived risk and enhancing trust in the brand. Their study on the effect of country of origin, product knowledge, and brand familiarity on Indonesian women's intention to purchase Korean cosmetics highlights that consumers are more preferring to buy products from brands they are familiar with. The study further suggests that brand familiarity serves as a mediator, as it encourages information-seeking behavior and further reinforces trust, leading to higher purchase intentions [17]. In another study by Jacob and Tan [18], brand familiarity is analyzed in the context of Samsung, revealing that brand familiarity has an important role in fostering purchase intentions by improving brand trust and recognition. Their findings indicate that the more familiar a consumer is with a brand, the more preferable by they are to associate it with high quality, thus increasing their purchase intention. This effect is magnified when coupled with product quality and social influence, suggesting that brand familiarity works in conjunction with other factors to enhance the overall purchasing decision [18].

Further supporting this, Chen et al. [19] explored the framing effect on purchase intentions in hotel booking websites, finding that brand familiarity positively impacts purchase decisions by providing a psychological safety net for consumers. Their study concluded that even when online reviews are limited or negative, consumers are more inclined to purchase from brands they know, as familiarity mitigates perceived risk and uncertainty [19]. This aligns with the general understanding that brand familiarity acts as a buffer against external factors that may deter potential buyers. Lastly, Faruq [20] studied how brand familiarity influences consumer behavior towards new brands and found that familiarity plays an integral role even for newer entrants to the market. Consumers are more willing to engage with and purchase from new brands if there is some degree of recognition or perceived familiarity with the brand, demonstrating that brand familiarity is a key factor in driving purchase intentions across different market segments [20].

H₂: Brand Familiarity and Consumers' Purchase Intention

Influencer credibility has emerged as a key factor in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the context of purchase intentions. The trust that followers place in influencers based on their perceived expertise, authenticity, and trustworthiness can significantly affect how consumers perceive a product and their likelihood of purchasing it. Zaman et al. [21] explored the mediating effects of online engagement and online reviews, finding that influencer credibility significantly enhances consumer purchase intentions. The study suggests that when influencers engage their audience meaningfully, their recommendations carry more weight, and followers are more likely to trust their product endorsements, leading to higher purchase intentions [21]. Research by Nugroho et al. [22] highlights the importance of influencer credibility in increasing purchase intentions. According to the research, influencers with high credibility, characterized by expertise, reliability, and attractiveness, are more effective in swaying consumers to purchase the products they promote. The study also emphasizes the role of parasocial relationships, where followers feel a personal connection with the influencer, further strengthening the impact of their recommendations [22]. This is particularly relevant in industries such as cosmetics and fashion, where product effectiveness is often conveyed through personal experience.

Kemeç and Fulya [23] further examined the relationship between brand trust, influencer credibility, and purchase intention on Instagram. The study found that influencer credibility has a positive and direct effect on consumer trust in the brand being promoted, which in turn increases purchase intentions. The study demonstrates that when consumers trust both the influencer and the brand, they are more likely to act on the influencer's recommendation and make a purchase. This finding highlights the critical role of trust in converting influencer recommendations into sales [23]. Finally, Coutinho et al. [7] examined the overall impact of influencer credibility on purchase intentions, focusing on trustworthiness and expertise. They concluded that influencers perceived as both trustworthy and knowledgeable are more likely to influence their followers' purchase decisions. This underscores the importance of influencers maintaining an authentic relationship with their audience, as credibility plays a pivotal role in shaping purchase behaviors, particularly in industries driven by personal recommendations [7].

H₃: Influencer Credibility and Consumers' Purchase Intention

Trust in social media platforms plays a vital role in shaping consumers' online purchase behaviors. Social media platforms act as intermediaries between businesses and consumers, and the trust consumers place in these platforms significantly impacts their purchase intentions. A meta-analytic study by Wang et al. [24] examined the relationship between trust and purchase intention in social commerce platforms, revealing that the more consumers trust the platform, the more likely they are to engage in purchase behaviors. The study emphasizes that trust in the platform's security, data protection, and content authenticity directly correlates with consumers' willingness to make purchases Wang et al. [24]. Similarly, Lăzăroiu et al. [25] explored consumers' decision-making process on social commerce platforms and highlighted the importance of online trust in reducing perceived risks and increasing purchase intentions. Their research found that trust mitigates concerns related to privacy, data breaches, and fraudulent activities, which are common deterrents in the e-commerce space. When consumers trust the platform to handle their personal information securely and deliver reliable services, they are more inclined to make purchases [25].

Jadil et al. [26] further expanded on this by studying the drivers of online trust and purchase intention in emerging markets. Their research found that the trustworthiness of the platform has an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes towards online shopping, leading to higher purchase intentions. This study also found that trust alleviates the uncertainty consumers often feel when transacting online, particularly in markets with fewer established e-commerce regulations [26]. Lastly, Maia et al. [27] examined the relationship between trust and competitive pricing on social commerce platforms, revealing that trust is a more important determinant of purchase intention than price. This result illustrates that while competitive pricing is essential, it is trust in the platform that ultimately drives consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers are willing to pay slightly higher prices if they trust that the platform will deliver a safe and reliable shopping experience [27].

H4: Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms and Consumers' Purchase Intention

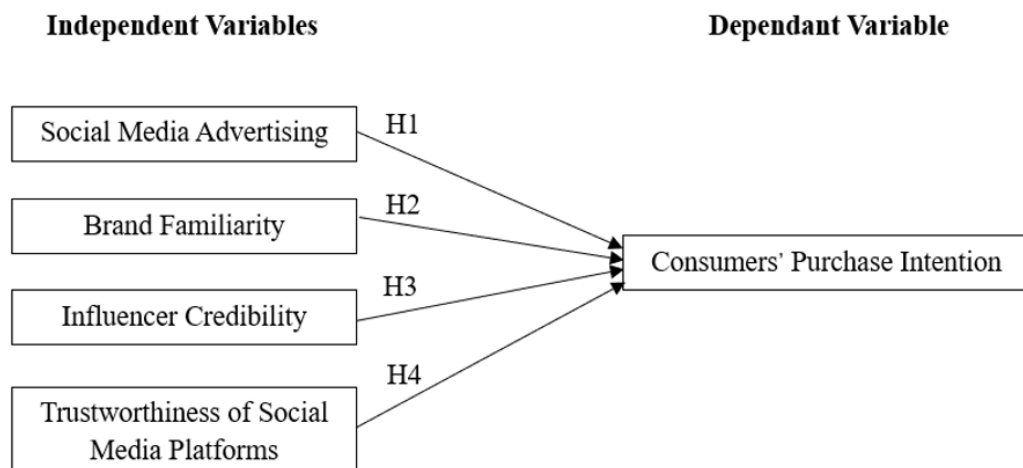


Figure 1.
Conceptual Framework.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the impact of social media marketing factors, including social media advertising, brand familiarity, influencer credibility, and trustworthiness of social media platforms, on consumers' purchase intentions in Malaysia's cosmetics industry. A structured survey serves as the primary data collection method, aligning with the research objectives to measure variables and test hypotheses accurately. This approach ensures objectivity and statistical reliability, enabling the analysis of relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, purchase intentions [28]. Using validated measurement scales, the study gathers quantifiable data from a representative sample and applies statistical methods such as Pearson's Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression for hypothesis testing [29].

The survey will be administered online, ensuring broad distribution to a geographically diverse sample of Malaysian consumers who actively engage with cosmetics brands on social media. This digital approach enhances efficiency and maximizes reach, allowing for the collection of data that is representative of the broader population [8]. Utilizing a structured questionnaire allows these variables to be operationalized and measured using predefined scales, such as a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." This structured format ensures the consistency and comparability of responses, making the data suitable for rigorous statistical analysis.

This study employs a cross-sectional time horizon, where data is collected at a single point in time [30]. This approach is well-suited to capturing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward social media marketing within the Malaysian cosmetics industry. The cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of how variables such as social media advertising, brand familiarity, influencer credibility, and the trustworthiness of social media platforms influence consumers' purchase intentions. The target population for this research comprises active social media users in Malaysia who are consumers of cosmetic products. These individuals frequently engage with cosmetics-related content on popular platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, which serve as key channels for social media marketing in Malaysia's cosmetics industry.

This study adopts convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate [31]. This approach is well-suited for efficiently gathering data from a large, geographically dispersed population, such as social media users engaged with cosmetics-related content. The sample size for this study has been determined to be 385 respondents, calculated using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator based on Malaysia's 2023 population of approximately 35.7 million [32]. This ensures a statistically significant sample size with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%, adhering to standard thresholds in social science research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Measurement Scale

This study evaluates the internal consistency and reliability of its variables using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, a widely recognized statistical method for assessing the coherence and dependability of survey items. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency. According to Ursachi et al. [33], a coefficient above 0.90 is considered excellent, between 0.80 and 0.89 as good, between 0.70 and 0.79 as acceptable, and below 0.70 as questionable or poor. However, values exceeding 0.95 may suggest redundancy among variables.

Table 1.
Result on Cronbach's Alpha Test for Total Result.

Category of Variables	Aspects	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Results of Reliability Test
Independent Variables	Social Media Advertising	5	0.974	Very Good Reliability
	Brand Familiarity	5	0.968	Very Good Reliability
	Influencer Credibility	5	0.972	Very Good Reliability
	Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms	5	0.971	Very Good Reliability
Dependent Variable	Consumer's Purchase Intention	5	0.969	Very Good Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha test results for this study exhibit exceptional internal consistency across all variables, with values ranging from 0.968 to 0.974 (Table 1). Social Media Advertising demonstrated the highest reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.974, indicating that the items effectively measure the construct. Similarly, Brand Familiarity (0.968), Influencer Credibility (0.972), and Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms (0.971) also showcased very good reliability, reflecting the robustness of the items in capturing these constructs. The dependent variable, Consumer Purchase Intention, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.969, confirming that the items measuring this outcome align consistently with one another. These findings emphasize the reliability of the survey design, ensuring that the scales used are both robust and appropriate for assessing the study's constructs.

4.2. Inferential Analytics

Pearson's correlation analysis Hahs-Vaughn [34] was conducted to examine the linear relationships between the dependent variable (Consumers' Purchase Intention) and the independent variables (Social Media Advertising, Brand Familiarity, Influencer Credibility, and Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms). This statistical method measures the strength and direction of relationships, with correlation coefficients (r) ranging between -1 and +1. A positive r indicates a positive linear relationship, while a negative r signifies an inverse relationship.

Table 2.
Result on Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient Analytics.

		Social Media Advertising	Brand Familiarity	Influencer Credibility	Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms	Consumer’s Purchase Intention
Social Media Advertising	Pearson Correlation	1	0.929**	0.903**	0.907**	0.901**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Brand Familiarity	Pearson Correlation		1	0.894**	0.901**	0.892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Influencer Credibility	Pearson Correlation			1	0.890**	0.916**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				<0.001	<0.001
Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms	Pearson Correlation				1	0.913**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					<0.001

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

The results of the Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient analysis reveal significant and strong positive relationships between all IVs and the DV, Consumer’s Purchase Intention, at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Social Media Advertising exhibits a correlation coefficient of 0.901, indicating a very strong positive relationship with consumers’ purchase Intention. This indicates that as social media advertising becomes more effective, consumers' propensity to purchase cosmetic products correspondingly increases. The significance level ($p < 0.001$) confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, providing robust evidence of the impact of advertising on purchase intention within the cosmetics industry (Table 2).

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Table 3.
Result of Hypothesis Testing.

Hypothesis Testing	P-value (< 0.05 = accepted)	Results
H ₁ : Social Media Advertising has a positive and significant influence on Consumers' Purchase Intention.	0.010	H1 is accepted
H ₂ : Brand Familiarity has a positive and significant influence on Consumers' Purchase Intention.	0.065	H2 is rejected
H ₃ : Influencer Credibility has a positive and significant influence on Consumers' Purchase Intention.	< 0.001	H3 is accepted
H ₄ : The Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms has a positive and significant influence on Consumers' Purchase Intention.	< 0.001	H4 is accepted

This finding highlights the importance of advertising on social media platforms in forming consumer behavior in the cosmetics industry, as the p-value of 0.010 is less than the threshold of 0.05. Brand Familiarity has a positive and significant influence on Consumer Purchase Intention is not supported, as the p-value of 0.065 exceeds the 0.05 threshold. While the regression coefficient indicates a positive relationship, the lack of statistical significance suggests that familiarity with a brand alone may not be sufficient to drive purchase intentions. Influencer Credibility has a positive and significant influence on Consumer Purchase Intention is strongly supported, with a p-value of less than 0.001. Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms has a positive and significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention, as accepted, with a p-value of less than 0.001.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how social media marketing factors influence consumer purchase intentions within the cosmetics industry in Malaysia. Notably, the results align with several previous studies regarding the significant impact of Influencer Credibility and Trustworthiness of Social Media Platforms on consumer purchase intentions. For instance, prior research has consistently highlighted that credible influencer significantly drive consumer behaviors by creating trust and relatability. This is reflected in the present study, where Influencer Credibility emerged as the strongest predictor ($p < 0.001$). Another significant contribution comes from Rathnayake and Lakshika [35], who explored the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intentions in the beauty industry. Their research concluded that trustworthiness is the

most significant dimension of influencer credibility in this sector, as beauty consumers tend to rely on credible influencers for product recommendations related to personal care. The study found that influencers who maintain high levels of trustworthiness and expertise are more successful in motivating their followers to purchase [35].

Similarly, previous research has emphasized the importance of trustworthy social media platforms in fostering consumer confidence, which aligns with the significant relationship found in this study between platform trustworthiness and purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). Alzaidi and Agag [36] investigated the role of trust and privacy concerns in the context of e-retail services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings indicate that consumers who trust the platform are more preferring to shop online, even amidst heightened concerns about online fraud and privacy. Trust in the platform's ability to maintain privacy and protect data emerges as a significant determinant of purchase intention, especially in uncertain times when online transactions have become increasingly common [36].

However, deviations from prior research were observed in the results for Brand Familiarity, which did not show statistical significance in predicting consumer purchase intention ($p = 0.065$). Former studies have indicated that brand familiarity positively impacts purchase decisions by fostering trust and reducing perceived risk. The lack of significance in this study could be attributed to contextual factors unique to the Malaysian cosmetics market, such as the dominance of influencer-driven trends over traditional brand recognition [22]. It is also possible that consumers in this segment prioritize product recommendations from influencers or trust in the platform over their familiarity with the brand itself, which explains the divergence from earlier findings.

The research confirmed the significant role of Social Media Advertising in shaping consumer purchase intention ($p = 0.010$), though its influence was weaker than expected when compared to prior studies. While previous research has underscored the critical impact of advertisements in building brand awareness and driving engagement, the relatively lower influence in this study may reflect a saturated digital advertising landscape. Consumers may experience and fatigue or prioritize user-generated content and influencer recommendations over traditional advertisements [37]. These discrepancies between the present study and prior research highlight the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior in social media marketing, emphasizing the need to adapt strategies to local and industry-specific contexts.

6. Conclusion

This research explored the influence of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions in Malaysia's cosmetics industry, emphasizing four critical factors: social media advertising, brand familiarity, influencer credibility, and the trustworthiness of social media platforms. The results reveal that influencer credibility and the trustworthiness of social media platforms are the most influential factors driving purchase intentions, emphasizing the critical role of trust and authenticity in shaping consumer behaviors. Social media advertising also demonstrated a positive and significant influence, albeit with a smaller effect size, while brand familiarity, contrary to expectations, was not statistically significant. These results emphasize the shifting dynamics of consumer preferences in the digital era, where consumers prioritize influencer recommendations and platform credibility over traditional brand recognition.

These findings carry both theoretical and practical significance. They enhance the academic literature by reinforcing the pivotal role of trust-related factors in social media marketing while questioning the traditional focus on brand familiarity as a primary driver of purchase intentions. For practitioners, the results offer actionable insights, such as prioritizing collaborations with credible influencers and leveraging trustworthy platforms to build consumer confidence. Although the study effectively achieved its objectives, it acknowledged certain limitations, including time constraints, dependence on self-reported data, and the adoption of a cross-sectional design. Recommendations for future research include exploring additional industries, adopting mixed-method approaches, and examining evolving consumer behavior through longitudinal studies. This study offers a strong basis for comprehending and enhancing social media marketing strategies within Malaysia's cosmetics market, delivering valuable insights for both academic researchers and industry practitioners.

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