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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND PRODUCT PACKAGING ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS FOR ORGANIC PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of product packaging and social media influencers on consumers' purchase intentions for organic personal care products. A quantitative methodology was employed, with data collected from 382 respondents in Malaysia's northern regions through an online survey, using a purposive non-probability sampling method. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The findings indicate that both social media influencers and product packaging significantly influence consumers' intentions to purchase organic personal care products. Specifically, the study highlights how engaging social media influencers can create a strong emotional connection with consumers, enhancing their interest in organic products. Additionally, effective product packaging was found to play a vital role in capturing consumer attention and reinforcing brand values. These insights are invaluable for personal care and marketing companies, as they emphasize the need for strategic investments in social media influencer collaborations and thoughtful product design. By understanding these key factors, companies can develop targeted marketing strategies that not only boost purchase intentions but also foster long-term brand loyalty and competitiveness in the market. Furthermore, the study suggests the exploration of other factors that may influence purchase intentions, laying the groundwork for future research in this area.

Keywords:

Purchase Intention, Social Media Influencer, Product Packaging, Organic.

Introduction

The consumption of organic products, including the food, fashion, and cosmetics sectors, has grown significantly due to increased consumer awareness of environmentally friendly practices and the harmful effects of synthetic chemicals (Mohammad, N.B., 2019; Camelleri et al., 2023). This shift towards organic products is part of a broader trend towards a healthier lifestyle, driving demand and supply in the organic market (Ghazali, Soon, Mutum & Nguyen, 2017). As the demand for organic products continues to rise, the supply for these products naturally increases to meet consumer needs.

Specifically, consumers perceive organic personal care products, such as skin care, hair care, oral care, cosmetics, feminine hygiene products, deodorants, and toiletries, as having a lower environmental impact (Ghazali et al., 2017). These products, made from natural agricultural ingredients and free from chemical additives or synthetic fertilizers, contribute to environmental protection and promote a healthier lifestyle. According to Mohammad, N.B., (2019), organic personal care products are defined as high-quality products with minimal chemical usage, and features such as eco-friendliness, biodegradability, and ethical considerations like being free from animal testing and animal by-products (Mohammad, N. B., 2019). Increased consumer awareness of health care has led to a rise in demand for organic personal care products (Aste, E., 2017).

In Malaysia, a considerable number of researches have been undertaken regarding the organic food sector as a whole. However, studies on organic personal care products are still relatively limited and scarce (Mohammad, N. B., 2019; Batra et al., 2022). This is supported by Ghazali et al., (2017) who also stated that research on the market for organic personal care products in Malaysia is still limited primarily because this market is in early stages of development (Fauzi & Hashim, 2017; Kian & Chia, 2021). Additionally, consumer awareness of the benefits of organic products is also insufficient, which may affect their willingness to pay premium prices for these items due to their comparatively high prices (Taib, N. M. et.al., 2022).

Given the emerging trends and market potential in organic personal care markets, it is crucial to understand the factors driving Malaysian consumers' purchase decisions on related to organic personal care products. This information is worthwhile to marketers as well. Therefore, this study aims to investigate factors such as product packaging which consists of colour, font style, material used, design and printed information and the influence of social media influencers towards purchasing intentions regarding organic personal care products.

Literature Review

There are three points will be discussed in this section.

Purchase Intentions for Organic Personal Care Products

The personal care product industry encompasses a wide range of products focused on health and beauty, such as perfumes, sunscreen, hair and skincare products, cosmetics, and toothpaste. Organic personal care products are made with a high percentage of organic ingredients, including organic herbal and plant extracts, and are free from sulphates, parabens, phthalates, artificial colors, and artificial fragrances (Kim, Hee, & Chung, 2011). Purchase intention refers to the decision-making process of buying a specific product or brand (Shah et al., 2012). Understanding and meeting the needs and desires of target consumers is crucial for marketing

professionals and personal care manufacturers. Evaluating consumers' purchase intention for personal care products helps identify their expectations. Consumers with a strong desire to purchase a product are more likely to have a higher purchase intention (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). Purchase intention plays a significant role in the consumer's decision-making process. People who desire a product or have a specific motivation are more likely to choose and purchase it. When selecting a cosmetic product, consumers consider factors such as brand, price, and quality based on their preferences. These factors influence their perception of the product and ultimately their decision to purchase. The consumer's overall perception of a product is known as perceived value, which greatly impacts purchase intention. Manufacturers can use perceived value to adjust their products and increase consumer's purchase intention.

Purchase intention is a concept derived from the study of intention in social science (Tan et. al., 2017). In marketing, purchase intention is a recognized variable that explains consumer behavior in decision making (Khalid et. al., 2018). Factors like culture and sub-cultures influence purchase intention and consumer behavior. It's important to differentiate between intention and attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Intention guides a person to act in specific ways and implies phrases like "I should do," "I will do," and "I am going to do" (Triandis, 1977). Purchase intentions refers to the intention to purchase specific products in the future (Yeo, Sook Fern & Tan, Cheng Ling & Lim, Kah Boon & Khoo, Yong-Hwi., 2020). In other words, purchase intention refers to the likelihood of a consumer purchasing a particular item or service. It represents a desire to take a specific action and is commonly referred to as buyer purchase intention in consumer behavior and marketing research (Khalid et. al., 2018). Additionally, purchase intention is an essential element in consumer behavior for predicting future purchases, including specific products or brands (Su & Huang, 2010). It is important to note that the intention to buy does not necessarily translate into an actual purchase, as it depends on an individual's ability to follow through with their intention (Yeo et al., 2018). Thus, Liat and Wuan (2014) emphasize that when an individual plan to make a purchase over time, their purchase intention is formed. This intention is influenced by their behavior, perception of the product, and attitude (Keller, 2009).

Social Media Influencer and purchase Intentions

Social media influencers represent a new type of independent third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through platforms such as blogs, tweets and the use of other social media (Batra et al., 2022). The term "influencer" originates from marketing, describing individuals hired by brands to connect with target consumers, communicate brand messages, and achieve marketing objectives. According Rosara, Luthfia and Amia. (2020), influencers have the capacity to influence others' opinions due to their position, authority, knowledge and perceived relationships. They utilize social networks to cultivate authentic personal brands and expand their influence, generating "celebrity capital" that businesses can leverage to engage consumers (Rosara et.al., 2020)

Essentially, an influencer is someone who can significantly affect the purchasing decisions of others, typically, through their substantial social media followings. Research indicates that Irish millennial males are less familiar with traditional advertising methods, as they navigate a landscape where the internet and social media play a crucial role in daily activities. These millennial consumers express a wide opinions, ideas, and interests when interacting with social media influencers. This dynamic engagement fosters a deeper relationship between millennials and social media influencers, highlighting the profound interrelationship that exists in the digital age (Rosara, & Luthfia, Amia, (2020).

Product Packaging and purchase Intentions

The competitiveness of business environments has increased the importance of product marketability in meeting customer needs. Packaging has become crucial for sales promotion, as businesses aim to capture and maintain customer interest. Strategic packaging can boost sales and market share while also reducing promotional costs as more customers are drawn to the products. According to Raheem, Ahmad, Visnu & Imamuddin, (2014); Khan, Marium & Waheed, Sidra & Ahmad, Nawaz, (2018), product packaging plays a dual role in promoting a product and protecting it from environmental factors. Consumers often rely on packaging to assess the quality of a product, making product packaging, especially at the point of sale, significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions (Khan, Marium & Waheed, Sidra & Ahmad, Nawaz, 2018). Previous research has highlighted that packaging is crucial in product promotion and in encouraging purchase intentions (Rundh, 2007). The design, content, and color of packaging also play a vital role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions (Raheem, Ahmad, Visnu & Imamuddin, 2014). Overall, packaging is considered a key feature of a product, aiding in its differentiation in the marketplace.

Methodology

This quantitative method and non-probability purposive are employed in the present study. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or expert sampling, is a type of nonprobability sampling. The main objective of purposive sampling is to generate a sample that can reasonably be considered representative of the population (Lavrakas, 2008; Shafira, A., & Mayangsari, L., 2020). The population for this study is from Kubang Pasu, Kedah. Data were collected through an online questionnaire survey using google form to assess purchase intentions for organic personal care products. The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp. The measures used to operationalize the constructs included in the investigated models and the questionnaires were mainly adapted from previous studies.

In this study, the dependent variable is purchase intentions, while the independent variables are social media influencers and product packaging (refer to figure 1). The data collection utilized a questionnaire measured on a Likert Scale consisting of 33 items rated on a 5-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree). Out of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 382 responses were received, resulting in a total of 382 valid responses. The data analyzed using SPSS version 26.

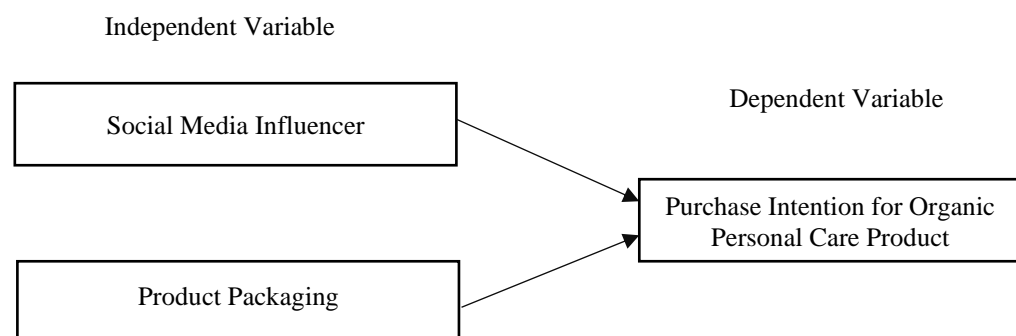


Figure 1: Research Framework

Results and Discussion

Data are analysed using SPSS version 26. For section A, demographic profile, frequency and percentage were used. For descriptive analysis, mean score interpretation was used.

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

| Characteristics | | Number of Respondent (n=382) | Percentage |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 150 | 39.3 |
| | Female | 232 | 60.7 |
| Race | Malay | 226 | 59.2 |
| | Chinese | 94 | 24.6 |
| | Indian | 43 | 11.3 |
| | Others | 11 | 2.9 |
| | | | |
| Age | 18 – 22 years old | 226 | 59.2 |
| | 23-27 years old | 94 | 24.6 |
| | 28-32 years old | 43 | 11.3 |
| | 33-37 years old | 11 | 2.9 |
| | 38 – 42 years old | 8 | 2.1 |
| Occupation | Government | 140 | 36.6 |
| | Private | 176 | 46.1 |
| | Others | 66 | 17.3 |
| Income | RM 2,500 and below | 180 | 47.1 |
| | RM2501 – RM3500 | 95 | 24.9 |
| | RM3501 – RM 4500 | 49 | 12.8 |
| | RM4501 – RM5,500 | 20 | 5.2 |
| | RM 5501 and above | 38 | 9.9 |

A total of 382 respondents were involved in this study, with the majority of the respondents are female (60.7%) and 39.3% are male. Majority of the respondents which are 59.2% of the them were aged 18-22 years old and only 2.1% of the respondents were aged 38 to 42 years old. Most of the respondents identified as Malay (59.2%) and worked in the private sector (46.1%). The majority of the respondents had a monthly income of RM 2500 or below.

Reliability Analysis

The reliability coefficients for each item in the questionnaire are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Coefficient for Each Section of The Questionnaire

| Questionnaire | No of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Section B: | | |
| Social Media Influencer | 11 | 0.774 |
| Packaging | 24 | 0.721 |
| Section C: | | |
| Purchase Intention | 6 | 0.812 |

In Table 2, the purchase intention variable exhibits the highest coefficient alpha value of 0.812, reflecting strong internal consistency. The social media influencer variable follows with a

coefficient alpha value of 0.774. Although the packaging variable's coefficient alpha value is slightly lower at 0.721, it still indicates an acceptable level of reliability, albeit not as high as the other two variables.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics of the variables are presented in Table below. Means interpretation score for this study interpreted based on Moidunny (2009).

Table 3: Interpretation of Mean Score

| Mean Score | Interpretation |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1.00 -1.80 | Very Low |
| 1.81-2.60 | Low |
| 2.61 – 3.20 | Medium |
| 3.21 – 4.20 | High |
| 4.21 – 5.00 | Very High |

Source: Moidunny (2009)

Based on Table 3, the mean scores are categorized into five criteria. A score of 1.00 to 1.80 indicates a very low level. Scores from 1.81 to 2.60 fall into the low category. Scores between 2.61 and 3.20 are considered medium. Scores from 3.21 to 4.20 are classified as high, and scores from 4.21 to 5.00 are classified as very high.

Table 4: Mean Score Interpretation Table

| Variable | Mean | Interpretation of Mean Score |
|-------------------------|------|------------------------------|
| Social Media Influencer | 3.82 | High |
| Product Packaging: | | |
| Colour | 4.26 | |
| Font style | 4.33 | |
| Material | 4.23 | High |
| Design | 4.31 | |
| Printed information | 4.30 | |
| Purchase Intention | 4.33 | High |

The table 4 shows that social media influencers have a significant impact on consumer purchase intentions for personal care products, with an average influence score of 3.82. This finding is in line with earlier studies conducted by Batra, Lipi & Garg, Nandini & Mittal, Ruhee (2022). People tend to follow influencers who share the same interests as them and whom they can relate to. This means that the use of social media influencers is able to change the lines of communication between consumers and companies (Nurhandayani, A., Syarief, R., & Najib, M. (2019). Glucksman (2017) mentioned in their study that marketing communication through social media influencers has proven to significantly change the way a product interacts with customers in a positive manner. Previously, communication was established with only one direction where consumers only received information about the product or services through advertisements displayed on television, magazines, or company websites. Now, consumers can obtain information from both company advertisements and social media influencers.

In terms of product packaging, several elements are crucial for attracting and influencing consumers. The mean scores for packaging components are as follows: color (4.26), font style

(4.33), material used (4.23), design (4.31), and printed information (4.30). These findings emphasize the crucial role that packaging plays in shaping consumer appeal and purchase decisions and they clearly show how important it has become for many businesses to use packaging as a vital tool for sales promotion. The findings of this study are consistent with research by Yeo, Sook Fern, Tan, Cheng Ling, Lim, Kah Boon, and Khoo (2020), which also discovered that packaging colour, material, and graphics substantially influence purchase intentions.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, the influence of social media influencers and product packaging on consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products were examined. The findings revealed that both factors have a positive effect on purchase intentions. Social media and the influencer of social media are able to influence consumer behaviour and lifestyle. Thus, in order to increase the demand for organic personal care product, the marketers need to plan the strategy, target audiences and work in collaboration with influencers to create worthy marketing campaign.

Besides, product packaging which the elements such as packaging color and font style plays critical roles in shaping consumer decisions. Therefore, the packaging industry should determine the factors of packaging that can enhance to customers' purchase intention. There are certain limitations for this study. Firstly, the respondents were exclusively from Kubang Pasu, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the study focused solely on organic products. Thus, for future research, this study may explore cross-cultural differences, considering how various cultures impact consumer preferences and purchase intentions. Researchers might also delve into innovating packaging designs, authenticity of social media influencers, emotional appeals and many more. These avenues offer exciting opportunities to advance the understanding of consumer behaviour and decision making in the context of organic personal care products.

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