HSP

The Impact of Social Media Influencer on Customer's Attitude

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Abstract: Social media influencer is becoming the spokesperson for brands nowadays. This study investigates the impact of social media influencer on consumer's attitude which focuses on source attractiveness and product match-up. This study applied Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura in order to explain the relationship between variables. This quantitative research collected its data through online survey which was distributed to 120 respondents from Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA, Kuala Lumpur. The findings show that relationship between variables are significant. Social media influencer that have the characteristics such as source attractiveness and product match-up are more likely to change the consumer attitude toward certain brands. Hence, this study contributes to the field of communication through the establishment of a more comprehensive variables related to social media influencer in changing customer's attitude.

Keywords: Social media influencer, source attractiveness, product match-up, customer's attitude

1. Introduction

According to Martineau (2019), influencer is someone who has an excellent credibility to influence people to purchase items via promotion activities. The influencer usually will be sponsored by brands to promote the products or services to gain customer's trust on the products or services. Social media influencer is more influential and expert in making people trust and feel attracted to them (Gashi, 2017). There are positive and negative sides in handling promotion activities as an influencer. Glucksman

(2017) mentioned that some influencers have the ability to attract people to believe in them. However, asking the influencers to promote some brands might also develop the insincere feelings and emotions in promoting the brands. Influencer is paid to promote. Hence, influencer might be doing it because of profits. Freberg, Freberg, Graham & McGaughey (2010) mentioned social media influencers are the third-party individual who determine the attitude, opinions and actions of the followers. They use social media such as Twitter, Blogger, Instagram and Facebook. Since social media influencer started to gain attention worldwide, companies have started to take the opportunity to sponsor the social media influencer to promote the brands (Gashi, 2017).

Worldwide, there are many social media influencer and this trend is growing day by day. For example, one of the best social media influencer is Christiano Ronaldo. People know that Christiano Ronaldo is one of the greatest footballer who appeared in Shopee's advertisement in 2019. It drives people towards him and the Shopee more since that. According to Mohammed from Business Insider US (2019), Shopee recorded three times profit in September that year to compared to the previous year. Thus, it can be seen how influential someone can be and due to credibility that Christiano Ronaldo has, he managed to influence people to use and purchase through Shopee.

This research seeks to understand the impact of social media influencer on customer's attitude. The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. A review of the literature is carried out in subsequent sections, focusing on social media influencer, source attractiveness, product match-up and customer's attitude. The next section outlines the research method while the last section will present discussions and recommendations for future study

2. Literature Review

This section will present reviews on literatures that discussed about social media influencer, source attractiveness, product match up and customer's attitude.

2.1 Source Attractiveness

Beauty is similar to physical presence and appearance; so it has a strong way to influence and attract people. Attractive people are seen as attractive, and they often have advantages. People usually thought attractive people were common, interesting and sexually sensitive (Davis et al., 2001). This is also true to Dion et al. (1972) in which they claimed that the perceptions of individuals' characteristics can be influenced by their physical appearance. Specifically, attractive individuals are evaluated more positively than unattractive individuals. Zaikman et al. (2015) also added in their study that physical appearance can alter an individual response or perception of the other party in which beautiful is regarded as a factor either to have a positive or negative opinion on someone else.

There is a stereotyping called "What is beautiful is good" and shows that perception is linked to physical attractiveness (Vermeir & Sompel, 2014). These scholars believe that an attractive person could make a change towards someone's attitude. Hence, to be an influencer a person must be physically attractive and this variable has a relationship with consumer's attitude. Therefore, these people are more accepted by the society and get less rejection (O'Grady,1989). This can be seen in advertisement around the world in which product is advertise with an attractive person to garner attention on the product. Cooper et al. (1992) agreed that when something attractive is presented, the advertisement will be viewed thus increasing the product awareness.

2.2 Product Match Up

Endorsing a good features of social media influencer with the brand and products will make the advertisement successful. It is vital for the brand to hire an influencer who matches with the products as it will enhance the acceptance and the desire of consumer towards the advertisement. (Solomon et al., 1992). A brand will be more favourable when they endorsed attractive spokesperson compare to

unattractive spokesperson because the congruence between the endorser and the brand must be fit and appropriate to give good results (Till & Busler, 2000). Khatri (2006) stated that attractive people is seen as the one on top of the social classes pool and this illusion create the needs for consumer to consume the "right" drinks and foods or clothes and other material to appear identical in social statuses. However, the problem lies within the concept of celebrity preferences. Roy and Jain (2016) suggested that celebrity are often not linked to their respective brand which will create displacement or loss of information as consumer will remember the celebrity and not the product.

Advertisement will be more effective if the consumers are able to identify the influencer or the representative of the brand (Manuka et al., 2016). Such as the cases with old spice in which the advertising helped the company to again be able to create margin and profit (Jens et al., 2007). In this notion, the advertisement plays on the concept of what a man is by portraying a masculine, gentle yet dashingly handsome and considerate. The actor is very well known which help to alleviate the consumer views to a more positive and acceptable.

The beauty and imagination that influencers have combined with the right product will improve both the product and the influencer which will have a positive effect on customer perceptions and purchasing intentions (Till & Busler, 2000). A good match between the influencer and the product will also increase the power of people's perception and shift their attitude towards the product (Liu et al., 2007). Choosing the right endorser that match with the brand itself is important to make the advertisement work effectively. Therefore, product match-up can change consumers' attitude.

2.3 Consumer Attitude

Consumer attitude is defined as a psychological course of judging a particular object with benefit and disadvantages (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). This is also the definition given by Ajzen (2001) as he explained that consumer's responds to products with their bias opinion of personal reason. It continues to persist as an occasional occurrence over time. For example, over time, hearing a loud noise could generate a negative attitude towards the sound (Solomon et al., 2010).

Attitude, as it endures for a longer duration, can be seen as a fixed way of thought. It requires tests of whether or not the things referred to continue. When experience is acquired, the attitude formed by experience will change (Ajzen, 2001; Chen, 2007; Armstrong, 2009). Consumers have an attitude to particular product, such as the type of product that an individual want to use. They are able to form their attitude towards a brand when customers are sufficiently inspired. The more optimistic the attitude about the action is, the greater the intention of the person to perform under consideration (Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005). According to Chen (2007), consumer's attitudes and expectations for the purchasing of a specific product are based on the personality of the consumer and the personal desirability of behaviour.

3 Methodology

A quantitative method was employed to investigate the impact of social media influencer on customer's attitude. The research used quantitative method in order to achieve the research objective and goals. This research is using probability sampling. Probability sampling is target on a population. Therefore, questionnaires were distributed to the students of Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA. A pre-test was conducted for this study. According to Hu (2014), pre-test is a stage where the researchers will distribute a set of questionnaires to the targeted group of respondents to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. In this study, researchers have prepared a set of questionnaires and it has been distributed to the targeted respondents which is the students of Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA, Kuala Lumpur.

4. Findings

The findings shown that 34 (28.3%) of the respondents were male respondents while another 86 (71.7%) respondents were female respondents. Among 120 respondents, 86 (71.7%) of the respondents are aged between 20-25 years old and other 34 (28.3%) are between 26-30 years old. For the level of education, 54 (45.0%) respondents are diploma students, 62 (51.7%) respondents are degree students, 2 (1.7%) respondents are master students and the balance 2 (1.7%) is PhD student.

To examine the reliability of the instrument, this study used Cronbach's alpha values that can measure the internal consistency of the instruments used for the purpose of this study. Table 4.2 shown that the source attractiveness variable shows $\alpha = .729$ while the alpha value for the product match-up is $\alpha = .596$. The last variable is the consumer attitude variable and its alpha value is $\alpha = .921$. Overall, the value of the Cronbach's alpha is acceptable for purpose of this study.

Hypothesis 1 are discussed on the relationship between source attractiveness and consumer attitude and the result shown that there is a relationship between source attractiveness and consumer attitude. It shows that the more attractive the influencer, the higher the chance is to change consumer attitude. Hypothesis 2 are discussed on relationship between product match-up and consumer attitude. Other than that the research shown that there is a relationship between product match-up and consumer attitude. It shows that product match-up gives a positive impact towards consumer attitude.

5. Discussion and Recommendation

The first objective of this study is to determine the relationship between source attractiveness and consumer attitude. Based on the findings, there is a positive relationship between source attractiveness and consumer attitude. Consumers tend to be more interested in consuming or purchasing the products endorsed by the influencer who is more attractive. Attractiveness is not as in physical appearance only but as well as the way the influencer convince the viewers that the products are good. Thus, being an attractive influencer will definitely change the consumer attitude towards certain product and that is when a positive relationship between source attractiveness and consumer attitude occurred. These findings are similar with the past researches like Zaikman et al. (2015); Vermeir & Sompel (2014); Cooper et al. (1992); Davis et al. (2001) and Dion (1972). The previous research found that there is a relationship between source attractiveness and consumer attitude.

The second objective of this study is to determine the relationship between product match-up and consumer attitude. The finding shows a positive relationship between product match-up and consumer attitude. When it comes to endorsing a brand, the company will choose an influencer that suits the brand to influence more viewers to try the brand. It is essential for the brand to be endorsed by a suitable influencer who matches with the brand. For example, an advertisement of an isotonic drinks being promoted by a sport person to make people believe that the isotonic drink can boost energy. This finding is similar with the past researches like Solomon et al., (1992); Till & Busler (2000); Khatri, Puja (2006); and Roy & Jain (2016). They found a relationship between product match-up and consumer attitude.

However, future research may also make change to further examine the relationships. First, this research can focus on different group of respondents such as working adults from different organizations to get different perspective and ideas of this topic. As for current study, the researcher is collecting data from KUPTM students only and the scope might be small. Other than that, future researchers are recommended to conduct a qualitative study to get detailed answers and in-depth explanations from respondents. These will help to gain better insights on how social media influencer can influence customer's attitude.

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