The Role of Influencer Engagement towards Online Buying Intention

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Abstract: Influencer engagement is a process where communication, sharing feeling, thoughts, and experiences with followers with the intention to connect with the influencers in social media platform. Though influencer engagement is one of the popular strategies, influencers that lack of capacity to generate compelling content may fail to connect with the retailer's target audiences which mean less intention to buy online. The current studies also just focus on the interaction between influencers and their followers from the perspective of influencer role as a seller with lacking research on follower's perspectives especially in the context of Gen Z in Malaysia. Hence, this research aims to identify the level of influencer engagement towards buying intention, the level of buying intention, and the relationship between the level of influencer engagement and buying intention. The Human Brand Model is adopted as the theoretical foundation in this research. This study has collected data from 100 respondents among Gen Z students in UTHM. The sample collected based on a quantitative research method where a self-administrated questionnaire and online survey will be applied. All the collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to develop the quantitative reports presented in the form of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. This study helps marketers to understand the best marketing strategy to adopt especially for Gen Z. As a result, all variables have a significant relationship with online buying intention and Ideality refers to the influencers' engagement that can give a good visual in branding and marketing has the highest correlation coefficient of 0.542.

Keywords: Buying Intention, Influencer Engagement, Influencer Marketing, Human Brand, Gen Z

1. Introduction

With the advancement of the internet and social media, online activities including shopping have become more popular especially for the young generation (Anderson, 2018). This happen as more information available online and it makes easy for consumer to compare products and prices (Zak & Hasprova, 2020). Moreover, it has become more convenient and comfortable for consumers as they can find anything through online (Tarhini *et al.*, 2018). The use of social media has been extended not only for communication purposes (Nelsen *et al.*, 2020). For example, some businesses have used social media to interact or engage with their customers at the same time promoting their products or services (Nadezhda, 2017; Linqia, 2019). According to Willemsen *et al.* (2011), the social media influences 75 percent of millennia's buying decisions.

The role of social media in marketing strategies can be helped by using influencers' engagement, celebrity endorsement, or online customer review as the promoter of their product or service. Recognizing the rising pattern among marketers today, influencer engagement began reaching out to influential consumers in the hopes of maximizing their power to persuade others by sharing their consuming experience with others (Nadezhda, 2020).There are several digital influencers who create and share their content which is a great way to reach an audience such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blogs, Snapchat, etc. According to fashion industry experts, Instagram is currently the most popular platform, and this trend is predicted to continue in the near future (Casalo *et al.*, 2020).With the help of these digital technologies, it has the ability for consumers to change opinion and either raise brand awareness or ruin it. Despite the fact that social media have a large number of influencers, customers prefer to buy things from people with whom they have positive customer relations (Thomson, 2006). Influencers are seen as favorites by their followers since they motivate or lead others' conduct (Tiwari *et al.*, 2020). It may inspire their fans to look at products recommended by their favorite influencers. As a result of this circumstance, those items become more appealing and desirable. As a result of this phenomenon, retail marketers are cooperating with influencers to generate branded content that contains endorsements or product references in order to enhance consumer brand awareness and product acquisition (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The use of influencers for marketing purposes has become more popular as this technique could reach a better audience to promote products and services (Riccomini *et al.*, 2021). The use of influencers is very easy and does not require high costs (Tarhini *et al.*, 2018). An influencer could be anybody such as a celebrity, journalist, or blogger, and also it could be a politician, athlete where they are actually a form of social micro-celebrity (Paterson, 2017). According to a survey by Bailis (2019), 86% of brand marketers used influencer marketing in their 2017 promotional strategies, and 92% of them considered it to be successful. In 2018, almost 89% of these marketers said influencer marketing had a greater or equal return on investment than other marketing platforms (Mediakix, 2018). According to Andrew (2021), influencer partnerships may have a major impact on marketing outcomes, especially on more interactive, visual outlets, thus these influencers spend their days understanding the ins and outs of each network, as well as what can communicate with audiences. Influencers may be found in a variety of fields, including health and fitness, fashion and cosmetics, beauty, cuisine, high-tech, and others (Raggatt *et al.*, 2018; Klassen *et al.*, 2018).

Influencers used social networking as a new way to communicate with consumers. Forms of interaction include likes, comments, shares, retweets, and reactions that influence the buying intention (Erkan, 2015). These are widely accessible and can be a helpful way to start vetting possible influencers because they demonstrate how engaged their followers are with their posts (Rebelo, 2017). The more followers' influencer has, meaning one single post can drive a ton of web traffic, user-generated content, and sales (Andrew, 2021). In their positions as experts, influencers can affect buying decisions, proving the relationship between influencers and purchasing behavior while also inferring an underlying link to authenticity, competence, trustworthiness, relatedness, and other traits an influencer may have. As a

result, the relationship between influencers and purchasing intention may be established. The focus of this study will be on investigating this relationship from the perspective of the consumer.

According to Raggatt *et al.*, (2018), nearly 90 percent of social media users are encouraged to make a purchase after watching social media content, with 33% of these users believing influencers are reliable sources for making buying decisions. The way how influencers engage with their customers become the key factor in buying intention (Patel, 2021). . Though many individuals use social media to feel close and connected to one another, it could not guarantee that they have intention in online buying (Ladhari *et al.*, 2020). According to Dwivedi *et al.*, (2021), influencers that lack of capacity to generate compelling content may fail to connect with the retailer's target audiences which mean less intention of online buying from the customers. Thus, researchers have recently called for an investigation to figure out which role of influencers are the best fit for them (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Moreover, most of past research has looked at the interaction between influencers and their followers from the perspective of influencer role as a seller (Breves *et al.*, 2019; Casalo *et al.*, 2020) while little research on follower's perspectives (Ki & Kim, 2019) especially in the context of gen Z and online shopping environment in Malaysia. This study focused on the sense of emotional attachment that influencers prioritize in order to influence consumers' online buying intention. In order to acknowledge this case study, this research will explore the relationship between the level of influencer engagement and online buying intention among gen Z in the context of Malaysia.

Therefore, to achieve the research objectives the level of influencer engagement towards buying intention among gen Z and the level of buying intention among gen Z are measured. Consequently, the relationship between the level of influencer engagement and buying intention among gen Z is identified.

This study was conducted at UTHM, and the research respondents were all UTHM students. Questionnaires were applied as the research tool in this study, which used a quantitative approach. The reasons for UTHM students were chosen because they represent to gen Z.

This study could help marketers to understand marketing strategies that are efficient especially for gen Z. Besides, this study provides an understanding and knowledge on how influencers can influence and attract their followers to purchase online shopping. Plus, this study can create a valuable reference for future researchers. By using this study, this research will combine influencers marketing and followers' purchase intention in one framework.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Buying intention

Buying intention is described as an expectation of future consumer behavior that has a significant impact on attitudes (Fandos & Flavian, 2006).Attitudes change throughout time as a result of a learning process, and they are influenced by a variety of factors. Applying social media to shopping has become a new phenomenon that is now being implemented everywhere to expose customers to their purchasing intentions (Tiwari *et al.*, 2020). A person's purchase preferences will be influenced by the effect of advertising elements given by marketplaces (Hausman & Siekpe, 2009). Consumers will gather knowledge through reviewing their prior behavior, preferences, and recommendations from others. Consumer also will go through the process of evaluating possibilities before deciding on a purchase (Chi & Kilduff, 2011). This is the scenario when consumers involve stages of behavior in buying intention such as pre-purchase and purchase the product or service (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2021). Buying intention and the intention to acquire online are influenced by various factors other than the influencers' characteristics (Nadezhda, 2020). One kind of research has focused on influencers' personal characteristics, such as authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2020), attractiveness and closeness (Lou & Yuan, 2019), as crucial factors for followers to like and eventually follow them. Another study discovered that

followers are drawn to visually appealing content from influencers (Ki & Kim, 2019), and instructive (Stubb & Colliander, 2019).

2.2 Influencer Engagement

More businesses are using social media influencer to promote their product or service (Lye, 2021). Businesses are employing influencers as a tool to promote their product or service as it gets away from the single approach of traditional advertising and learns to interact with customers and establish long-term connections (Guo, 2021). Influencer engagement is the practise of engaging with followers on social media and exchanging opinions, feelings, and experiences (Ki & Kim, 2019). Furthermore, consumers now rely on influencers to help them make decisions, and an influencer is someone who has the authority, skill, position, or relationship with their target audience to influence others' purchase decisions (Geyser, 2021). As a consequence, influencers are more fascinating to social media users than celebrities since they appear to be average people (Danesi, 2018). Influencers, on the other hand, are driven by a hidden business interest, which is why they work so hard to preserve their followers' positive perceptions (Abidin & Thompson, 2012). As a result, followers perceive influencer interactions to be far more personal, fast, and intimate (Boyd, 2006). It refers to the promotion of products and services by people who take action to influence other consumers buying decisions in the context of influencer marketing (Zak & Haspora, 2020). The popularity of this strategy is increasing day by day with the help of media personas in branding and advertising product and service (Quesenberry, 2020). From the past study, there are a lot of researchers stating that when an influencer promotes or supports their product, the sales increase. Businesses have long been aware of this phenomenon, and there are still several examples of firm particularly high-end ones are employing influencers.

2.3 Gen Z

According to Andrew (2021), gen Z is generation that born between year 1997 to 2012. Gen Z has certain unique characteristics, such as spending money with caution before acquiring a product or service (Mrad *et al.*, 2020). In addition, they are also thinking about how they engage with social media (Dragseth 2020). This is because, according to Patel (2021), generation Z is more competitive, desires independence, could multitask, more entrepreneurial, prefer two-way communication, is genuinely digital-native, and more aware with the growth of technology.

2.4 The Relationship between Influencer Engagement and Buying Intention

Countless businesses have engaged the support of influencers in order to reach out to more consumers and influence their buying decisions, as evidenced by a few studies that demonstrate influencer interaction has a significant association with buying intention (Nadezhda, 2020). The capacity of an influencer to influence is related to characteristics such as ideality, competence, and relatedness (Thomson, 2006). Consumers' positive emotional reactions toward influencers will start showing up in their endorsements, therefore the stronger the emotional attachment between influencers and consumers, the more likely they are to accept the influencer's product or brand recommendations (Ki & Kim, 2019). Previous study has shown that strong links between customers and celebrities improve value transfer in endorsements, increasing consumer trust in the recommended brand as well as their purchase intention (Hung et al, 2016). Furthermore, the more successful the influencer' emotional transfer to their product ideas, the more likely their followers would accept the recommended product and become buyers (Ki & Kim, 2019).

2.5 Theoretical Background

Several theories have been used to explain the buying intention including the Theory of Human Brand (Thomson, 2006) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), Theory of

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and Para-Social Interaction (PSI) (Horton & Richard, 1956) . These ideas have been used to better understand the behavioral elements that influence a person's choice of buying products. Thus, for the purpose of this research, the Theory of Human Brand (Thomson, 2006) is chosen as this theory has been used to identify the positive marketing result that use social media influencer as human brand (Ki & Kim, 2019) and evaluating the impact of social media activities on influencers sales (Saboo *et al.*, 2016). Hence it is suitable for this research to discuss and explain the buying intention towards influence engagement.

(a) Theory of human brand

Theory of Human Brand introduced by Thomson in year 2006 (Kim & Lee, 2019). This theory applied to any well-known individual who is the focus of commercial communication efforts and who builds a sense of attachment with his or her audience while also delivering strong marketing outcomes by meeting demands (Ki & Kim, 2019). There are three main concepts discuss in this theory (Thomson, 2006). First, when specific circumstances are matched, media personalities such as celebrities, politicians, or athletes are perceived as human brands such as having unique personalities and abilities. Second, the human brands give strong relationships towards others which can build loyalty bonds with the followers. Lastly, strong attachments may lead human brands to become successful in marketing strategies.

2.6 Research Framework

When human brands fit the needs of others, strong attachments are connected with committed partnerships. This occurs when a person has three basic psychological needs which are a sense of self-determination in decision-making and action, a sense of closeness, and a sense of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Thomson, 2006).This research has discussed the factors that can lead to buying intentions from consumers. In order to explain this scenario, Thomson (2006) have adopted Human Brand Theory. This theory will be used in this research to explain that social engagement can influence the buying intention. The purpose of the conceptual framework is to highlight the main components that make up the framework, which comprise the study's independent and dependent variables. This study included one dependent variable, buying intention, and a three-dimensional independent variable. The independent variables will be further discussed through three dimensions of influencer engagement which include ideality, relatedness, and competence.

Figure 2: Research framework

(a) Ideality dimension

Ideality in this context refers to the influencers' engagement that can give a good visual in branding and marketing their product and somehow can give an inspiration to the consumer to attract them in buying intention (Ki et al, 2020). According to Thomson (2006), ideality is one dimension of autonomy, which refers to a person's need to feel that his or her actions or behavior are self-chosen, self-governed, and self-endorsed (Deci & Ryan 2000). Other researchers also stated it is about the feeling of having authority in making decisions by their own choice and not pressure by another person (Ali, 2013).

(b) Relatedness dimension

Relatedness is defined as the interpersonal dimension, reflecting what a person feels and connected to others with caring relationships, and belongs to a community (Martela & Riekki, 2018). Others also define relatedness as an individual's need to feel socially linked to others and to establish meaningful interactions with them, according to the literature (Lee *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, when an influencer's personality is pleasurable and comparable to their own, this requirement for relatedness is specifically met. Further, the more influencers have similar beliefs and values with their followers, the more it gives them a sense of familiarity and satisfies their need for relatedness (Ki & Kim, 2019)

(c) Competence dimension

Competence refers to the degree to which a source is regarded as an expert, making it trustworthy, is determined by its knowledge and skill on a certain area (Willemsen *et al.*, 2011).Competence is also connected to trustworthiness and the ability of the influencer to offer appropriate recommendations (Moura *et al.*, 2016). The idea of competence also refers to an influencer's capacity to endorse certain goals and is part of an element of human social cognition (Kervyn *et al.*, 2022). As influencers are showing their competencies in engaging with the followers, consumers, or fans, it makes them be perceived favorably which is on the positive side and might be increasing their persuasion traits (Willemsen *et al.*, 2011).

(d) Buying intention

There are different factors that affect buying intention which are related to the influencers' features. When it comes to purchasing from online stores, the characteristics of the influencers may have an impact (Nadezhda, 2020). According to the findings of the past study, using well-known influencers leads to positive brand perceptions and as a result of greater buying intention (Chetioui *et al.*, 2020). This is because the elements of credibility that better explain consumer'a buying intentions are the perceived "attractiveness" and "trustworthiness" of influencers (Rebelo, 2017). Further, according to Thomson (2006), ideality, relatedness and competence are the main factors that influence buying intention.

2.7 Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between ideality and buying intention.
H2: There is a significant relationship between relatedness and buying intention.
H3: There is a significant relationship between competence and buying intention.

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology describes the strategy and techniques used to accomplish the objectives. It includes all research processes aimed at reaching the research's objectives. The purpose of the research methodology is to describe how the data for this study was collected and how the data was analyzed.

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative approach has been used for collecting the data to meet the objective of this study. Figure 3.1 shows the research process that has been conducted on this study

Figure 2: Flowchart of this study
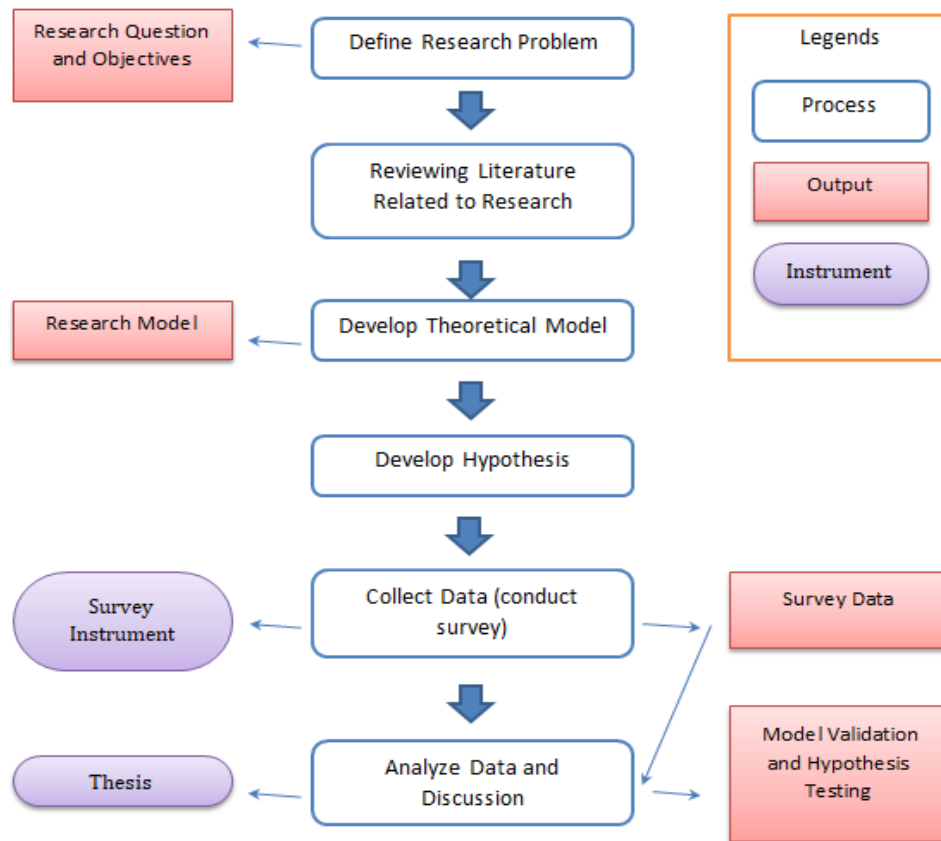
3.2 Sampling Method

This study will be conducted for student from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), Parit Raja, Johor. The population of the research consisted of students in UTHM with an estimated population of 16 000 students. According to Davis (1989), the population is the broader group of people to whom you want to apply your research findings. Based on the sampling schedule of Krejcie & Morgan (1970), this study has set a total of 377 respondents to answer the questionnaire that will be distributed via WhatsApp and Instagram.

3.3 Research Instrument

This study employed quantitative approaches, with a questionnaire functioning as the most appropriate instrument. Instrument study is a way for obtaining and gathering research data. A questionnaire is a tool used in quantitative approaches to collect structured data from respondents. Section A, section B, and section C comprise three sections of this questionnaire. To begin, Section A provided background information on the respondents, followed by Section B, which inquired about buying intention in relation to influencer engagement, and finally Section C, which inquired about the influencer engagement dimensions of ideality, relatedness, and competence in relation to buying intention. The questionnaires was adopted from the research by Ki and Kim, (2019).The level of agreement with a statement was measured using a scale ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

3.4 Data Analysis

All of the information gathered was organized in a systematic and easy-to-understand manner. The data was analyzed to determine the research's findings and whether or not the study will meet its objective.

(a) Descriptive analysis

The percentage and average mean value and frequency are calculated using descriptive analysis (Mahbobi, 2015). In order to acquire population information from the sample, researchers will utilize descriptive and inferential analysis in this study. The statistical analysis approach will use the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to examine the data. Furthermore, the research can provide clarity on the research's main outcomes and data information based on percentage and mean.

(b) Correlation analysis

The link between the variables is assessed using correlation analysis. Correlation analysis will be used in this study to determine the degree of correspondence between the variables. The strength of the relationship between the variables is expressed using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter discussed the data and findings of the research which have been obtained using questionnaires that were distributed through Google Form to the respondents. The data analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to answer the objective of this research. The data analysis was conducted, including reliability analysis, demographic analysis, descriptive analysis, and inferential analysis.

4.1 Turnover Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Population	Sample size	Questionnaire distributed	Questionnaire received	Percentage (%)
16,000	377	377	100	26.53

4.2 Reliability Test

The result of data collection from questionnaires that had been distributed to respondents has determined the validity and reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha method.

(a) Pilot study

A total of 30 questionnaires have been distributed to UTHM students and the data has been analyzed using the SPSS. If the value of Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.7, then the questionnaire can be distributed to the exact number of respondents and if it is less than 0.7, the questionnaire needs to be modified. The table below shows the reliability test of a pilot study.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha value for 30 respondents

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	No. item

Ideality	0.747	5
Relatedness	0.731	4
Competence	0.866	5
Online Buying intention	0.830	7

Table 3: Actual study for 100 respondents

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	No. item
Ideality	0.744	5
Relatedness	0.652	4
Competence	0.837	5
Online Buying Intention	0.889	7

Table 2 shows the Cronbach's Alpha value for 30 respondents while Table 3 shows the Cronbach's Alpha value for the actual data in this study. The Cronbach's Alpha value must be more than 0.7 to be acceptable (Bonett & Wright, 2014).

4.3 Descriptive Analysis (Demographic)

Table 4: Gender of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	64	64	64	64
	Male	36	36	36	100
	Total	100	100	100	

Table 4 shows the number of female respondents a total of 64 respondents while the total number of male respondents is 36 respondents out of 100.

Table 5: Race of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bajau	1	1	1	1
	Chinese	12	12	12	13
	Dusun	1	1	1	14
	Indian	3	3	3	17
	Kadazan	1	1	1	18
	Malay	82	82	82	100
	Total	100	100	100	

Table 5 shows the majority of respondents that answered the questionnaire in this study is Malay with a total of 82 respondents.

Table 6: Respondents from different faculty

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	FAST	4	4	4	4
	FKAAB	20	20	20	24
	FKEE	7	7	7	31
	FKMP	3	3	3	34
	FPTP	38	38	38	72
	FPTV	4	4	4	76
	FSKTM	12	12	12	88
	FTK	5	5	5	93
	PPD	5	5	5	98
	PPUK	2	2	2	100
	Total	100	100	100	

Table 6 shows the students from FPTP provide the highest response with 38 respondents while the lowest from PPUK with only 2 respondents.

Table 7: Current year of study

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Year 1	4	4	4	4
	Year 2	9	9	9	13
	Year 3	20	20	20	33
	Year 4	67	67	67	100
	Total	100	100	100	

Table 7 shows the majority of respondents that answered the questionnaire in this study are from year 4 with a total of 67 respondents.

Table 8: Reason for choosing the influencer

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Beauty	20	20	20	20
	Fashion	22	22	22	42
	Food	10	10	10	52
	Health	7	7	7	59
	Others	30	30	30	89
	Travel	11	11	11	100
	Total	100	100	100	

Table 8 shows most of the respondents are choosing others as their reason why they chose that influencer which includes games, technology and etc. with 30 out of 100 respondents while only & respondents go for health as their reason of choosing the influencer

Table 9: Category of influencer

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Macro	40	40	40	40
	Mega	40	40	40	80
	Micro	10	10	10	90
	Mid-tier	10	10	10	100
	Total	100	100	100	

From Table 9, it shows that most of the respondents chose the two types of influencers which were macro and mega. While other two types of influencers consist of the same value of respondents which was 10 out of 100.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis (Variables)

The features of individual variables are examined using descriptive analysis in this section. As a result, the researcher analyzed the data to determine the mean and standard deviation for all variables, including ideality, relatedness, competence, and online purchasing intention. Furthermore, using the Likert Scale to quantify the level of all independent and dependent variables, this analysis is an effective technique to separate each component of the mean distribution. The level of measurement of the center of the tendency for each question item in the questionnaire is shown in Table 10.

Table 4.10: Level of measurement

Average Mean Score	Level
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34-3.67	Medium
3.68-5.00	High

The mean or average interpretation scale is based on the scale set by previous researchers in this study conducted. Based on table 4.10, the average mean value is low if the level is between 1.00 until 2.33. Besides that, the mean average is categorized as moderate if the level is between 2.34 to 3.67. Moreover, if the level is between 3.68 to 5.00, hence the average mean range is high.

(a) Ideality

Table 11: Mean and standard deviation analysis for confidentiality variable

No.	Item Ideality	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Level
1	Social media influencers make me feel like a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self)	3.69	0.861	High
2	Social media influencers make me feel close to what is important to me in life	3.74	0.799	High
3	Social media influencers make me feel like the kind of person I want to be	3.84	0.735	High
4	Social media influencers inspire me to discover something new	4.20	0.682	High
5	Social media influencers fascinate me with new ideas	4.19	0.734	High
	Total Average	3.93	0.762	High

Based on Table 11, shows the value of the mean, standard deviation, and level of agreement for each question for the Ideality variable. In this study, the level of online buying intention towards ideality is high with the mean average is 3.93.

(b) Relatedness

Table 12: Mean and standard deviation for relatedness

No.	Item Relatedness	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Level
1	Social media influencers that I like know how to make me feel very close to him/her	3.29	0.832	Medium
2	Social media influencers that I like know how to give me a sense of intimacy	3.32	0.764	Medium
3	I feel social media influencer that I like quite a bit like me	3.15	0.821	Medium
4	I find social media influencers that I like have similar tastes and preferences as me	3.63	0.800	Medium
	Total Average	3.35	0.804	Medium

Based on Table 12, shows the value of the mean, standard deviation, and level of agreement for each question for relatedness. In this study the average mean value of relatedness is medium with the mean average is 3.35.

(c) Competence

Table 4.13: Mean and Standard Deviation for Competence

No.	Items competence	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Level
1	Social media influencers make me feel competence	3.78	0.836	High
2	Social media influencers make me feel adequate	3.73	0.863	High
3	Social media influencers make me feel capable and effective	3.83	0.766	High
4	I use social media influencer's content as a source of information	3.98	0.829	High
5	When looking at a social media influencer's content, I find he/she is an expert	4.09	0.805	High
	Total average	3.88	0.820	High

Based on Table 13, shows the value of the mean, standard deviation, and level of agreement for each question for competence. In this study, the level of the average mean value of competence is high with a mean value is 3.88.

(d) Online buying intention

Table 14: Mean and standard deviation for online buying intention

No.	Item Online Buying Intention	Mean(M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Level
1	I find social media influencers to be part of me	3.54	0.915	Medium
2	I feel personally connected to social media influencer	3.55	0.936	Medium
3	I feel emotionally attached to social media influencer	3.51	1.049	Medium
4	I am likely to consider buying one of the same products that social media influencers posted	3.91	0.854	High
5	I am likely to consider buying one of the same brands that social media influencers	3.84	0.940	High
6	I have the intention to try one of the same products that social media influencers	3.90	0.772	High
7	I have the intention to try one of the same brands that social media influencers	3.87	0.837	High
	Total Average	3.74	0.900	High

Based on Table 14, shows the value of the mean, standard deviation, and level of agreement for each question for online buying intention. In this study, the level of online buying intention variables is high with a mean value is 3.74.

(e) Analysis on influencer engagement towards online buying intention

Table 15: Analysis of influencer engagement towards online buying intention

Item	Average Mean Score	Level
Ideality	3.93	High
Relatedness	3.35	Medium
Competence	3.88	High
Online Buying Intention	3.74	High

Based on Table 15, the variable that had the highest mean score is an independent variable which is Ideality with the total average value (M=3.93). Meanwhile, the variable that had the lowest mean score is Relatedness with the total average value (M=3.35).

4.5 Normality Test

Normality analysis is needed before proceeding to the other test which is correlation analysis. According to Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012), a normality test was used to determine whether the study population is normally distributed or not. The data parametric test is used by conducting a Pearson correlation test if the data is normally distributed. Meanwhile, if the data is not normally distributed, the non-parametric test will be conducted using the Spearman correlation test. Besides that, to determine the distribution of data normality, researchers need to use either Kolmogorov-Smirnov or Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 16: Normality test analysis

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Ideality	.150	100	.000	.948	100	.005
Relatedness	.133	100	.000	.967	100	.017
Competence	.143	100	.000	.966	100	.012
Online Buying Intention	.149	100	.000	.961	100	.005

Table 16 shows the results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test. The analysis used 100 respondents and Shapiro-Wilk test values were taken into account because they exceeded 50 respondents. This analysis shows that all the values of variables p-value >0.005 which are 0.005, 0.017, 0.012, and 0.005. Hence, this data is normal and a parametric Pearson correlation test was used to describe the relationship between two variables and to achieve the objectives of the study.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

In this research, the parametric test of Pearson correlation test was used to describe the relationship between two variables

(a) The relationship between ideality (I) and online buying intention (OBI)

Table 17: Correlation between ideality and online buying intention

		Online Buying Intention
	Correlation Coefficient	0.542
Ideality	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100

H1 = There is a significant relationship between Ideality and Online Buying Intention

(b) The relationship between relatedness (R) and online buying intention (OBI)

Table 18: Correlation between relatedness and online buying intention

		Online Buying Intention
	Correlation Coefficient	0.470
Relatedness	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100

H2 = There is a significant relationship between Relatedness and Online Buying Intention

(c) The relationship between competence (C) and online buying intention (OBI)

Table 19: Correlation between competence and online buying intention

		Online Buying Intention
	Correlation Coefficient	0.510
Competence	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100

H3 = There is a significant relationship between Competence and Online Buying Intention

4.7 The Level of Correlation

Table 20: Interpretation of pearson coefficient.

Correlation	Strength of Relationship
1	Perfect
0.7-0.9	Strong
0.4-0.6	Moderate
0.1-0.3	Weak

Table 21: Level of coefficient correlation

Item	Correlation Coefficient	Level
Correlation between Ideality (I) and Online Buying Intention (OBI)	0.542	Moderate
Correlation between Relatedness (R) and Online Buying Intention (OBI)	0.470	Moderate
Correlation between Competence (C) and Online Buying Intention (OBI)	0.510	Moderate

Based on Table 20 and Table 21, all the independent variables which are ideality, relatedness, and competence do correlate with the dependent variable, online buying intention. The level of correlation between independent variables and dependent variables. In this research, the correlation coefficient between all variables with online buying intention is moderate.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

In general, all the research questions have been answered. The next few sections will discuss the objectives of this study that has been carried out to identify the level of online buying intention among Gen Z, the relationship between the level of influencer engagement and online buying intention among Gen Z.

(a) Research question 1: What is the level of influencer engagement towards online buying intention among Gen Z?

In this study, descriptive analysis has been used to describe the average mean score. Based on these three dimensions of influencer engagement, the level of ideality and competence is at a high level while the level of relatedness is at a medium level. The results of the data analysis collected significantly confirm the hypotheses that have been set earlier. Besides, it shows the ideality and competence are the strong factors that influence online buying intention among Gen Z. This study also consistent with the previous studies that the ideality in giving a good visual in branding and marketing products by influencers really gives inspiration towards consumers (Ki & Kim, 2019) and the competence of the influencer's capacity to make accurate recommendations can attract them in online buying intention (Chi & Kilduff, 201).

(b) Research question 2: What is the level of online buying intention among Gen Z?

The findings show the overall level of factors that influence online buying intention among Gen Z is at a high level. Only several statements that are in the medium level such as "I find social media influencers to be part of me", "I feel personally connected to social media influencers" and "I feel emotionally attached to social media influencers". The results show that ideality, relatedness, and competence are strong factors that influence online buying intention among Gen Z.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents indicated that they will consider and intend to purchase the same items or companies that social media celebrities recommend. In general, the respondents in this study have highly good comments while shopping online on social networking sites, implying that Gen Z has a medium to high degree of online buying intentions.

(c) Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the level of influencer engagement and online buying intention among Gen Z?

Overall, all hypotheses have been accepted and all hypotheses have a moderate level of correlation coefficient which is the significance between ideality, relatedness, and competence with online buying intention. Besides, in previous study by Thomson (2016) stated that the relationship between the theory of human brand and the features of influencer possess such as ideality, competence and relatedness have a positive significant relationship and it have been proved in this research.

5.2 Limitation of Study

There are several limitations encountered in this research just like other studies. Firstly, it is about the selection of respondents of this research which only focuses on UTHM's students and it does not represent the whole Gen Z in Malaysia. Secondly, the limited time of collecting the data for the research. Besides, this study is conducted during the pandemic situation which makes it harder. Thirdly, this research only uses a quantitative method which is not the qualitative method. Because of that, the respondents do not have a platform for them to share their thoughts and opinions about this study while the answers for the questionnaire are also limited. Plus, the respondents only have to choose what the researcher already prepared for the questionnaire.

5.3 Recommendation for the Future Research

The recommendation is needed in order to improve the future research related to this topic which makes it better than the past research. Firstly, future researchers may improve the selection of respondents of this research which will open it to more university students in Malaysia. Secondly, the time period of collecting the data should be extended to a long time as it can help to get more data from the respondents. The researcher also can use other types of methodologies such as qualitative methods in order to get some feedback about the topic hence the researcher will get more information regarding the research. For example, the satisfaction of buying the product from influencer recommendation or replicating similar research which to find out the differences in different areas. Lastly, use simple words and statements in a questionnaire which can make the respondents more understanding and easier for them to answer the question. Hence, the data collected will be more precise.

5.4 Conclusion

Influencer engagement is about communicating and sharing thoughts, feeling, and experiences with their followers and this scenario can connect with the role of influencers in the social media platform. The objective of the research is to identify the influencer engagement towards online buying intention among Gen Z as well as to identify the level of online buying intention among Gen Z. Besides that, this research also aims to identify the relationship between the level of influencer engagement and online buying intention among Gen Z.

In conclusion, ideality becomes the most important factor of influencer engagement towards online buying intention among Gen Z compared to other variables such as relatedness and competence. Besides that, the online buying intention towards Gen Z is between medium and high level. Moreover, this research also shows that there is a positive significant relationship for all variables and the highest correlation coefficient is ideality and it also has the highest average mean. Therefore, the three research

objectives that have been stated earlier have been achieved. Finally, this research can contribute to enhancing the knowledge and understanding of respondents' insight about influencer engagement towards online buying intention among Gen Z.

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