

Impact of Social Media Marketing Campaigns on Consumer Engagement and Pricing Perceptions: A Study of Malaysian Fashion Startups

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Information of Article	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received: Jul 2024 Revised: Aug 2024 Accepted: Sep 2024 Available online: Oct 2024</p> <p>Keywords: Social Media Marketing Campaigns Instagram Consumer Engagement Purchase Intentions Price Acceptance Malaysian Fashion Startups</p>	<p>The focus of this study was on the impacts exerted by social media marketing campaigns (SMMC) implemented by Malaysian fashion startup brands on online consumer engagement over the Instagram platform. The study explored how SMMC components—sharing, personalization, interactivity, and popularity—influence consumer engagement and how this engagement affects consumers' purchase intentions and their agreeableness to pricing.</p> <p>An empirical study was conducted using a mono-method quantitative approach and analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Data were collected from 385 Instagram users. The findings revealed that personalization ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.01$) had the strongest impact on consumer engagement, followed by interactivity, sharing, and popularity. Consumer engagement significantly influenced purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$) and agreeableness to pricing ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.05$).</p> <p>These results emphasize the importance for fashion startups to focus on delivering personalized and interactive content to enhance consumer engagement and drive favorable purchasing behaviors. This study provides strategic insights for fashion startups to optimize their Instagram marketing efforts and strengthen their competitive edge in the digital economy.</p>

Introduction

This study delineates the crux of the current study which pertains to social media marketing campaigns (SMMC), consumer engagement online, purchasing intentions as well as price acceptance, within the contexts of fashion startups in Malaysia. Included within this chapter is the scope and rationale behind the current study. In addition, the research background which is reflected based on some of the gaps that have been identified from the available literature are also presented here. The background of the study braces the introduction of the research gap along with the establishment of the key research questions as well as the objectives. The chapter then concludes with a brief description of the outline of this study. Today, traditional approaches to sourcing for information or making purchases are fast becoming obsolete as a result of the rapidly advancing technologies including social media platforms (Seo & Park, 2018). With their potential as a marketing tool being doubtful in the early years, social media platforms have evolved over time and today, serve as extremely viable marketing intelligence sources. Currently, social media platforms allow companies to monitor, track, analyze, as well as predict or anticipate consumer behaviors. For example, it is now possible for organizations to track the size of their audience when it comes to virtual marketing campaigns, or gain valuable insights concerning the needs of consumers, thus making it easier to address such needs (Alkharabsheh et al., 2021).

As a result of this, in the present age, it has become imperative for marketers to astutely leverage social media platforms toward achieving a competitive edge as well as better organizational performances (Ji et al., 2022). Unlike traditional media which is characterized by a sort of rigidity, social media platforms facilitate consumers in generating and exchanging content smoothly and in an interactive manner. This allows consumers to seamlessly get involved and interact with the various different brands out there. With communication technologies expanding and advancing at an unprecedented rate, social media has become tightly interwoven into the lifestyles of most of the world's population. With the rapidly growing popularity of social media channels within the realm of business, brands and business leaders have begun to increasingly turn toward these contemporary tools to fulfil consumer needs (De Vries et al., 2012). Modern day consumers are more partial to brand names that come with a strong social media presence, and which are capable of offering content which is highly engaging (Kavisekera & Abeysekera, 2016). The fast pace and high interactivity that characterize social media platforms have resulted in them becoming the focus of various stakeholders as well as numerous researchers' studies.

There is a scarcity of information concerning the components which make up the SMMC of Malaysian fashion startups, and the way by which such campaigns influence the startups' engagement with consumers. For instance, whether sharing, personalization, interactivity or popularity of the Malaysian fashion startups within social media platforms impact their engagement with consumers. This study seeks to broaden the understanding of how fashion startups could strengthen their engagement with consumers using social media marketing campaigns (SMMC). The aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the links amongst SMMC and consumer engagement within the fashion startup market in Malaysia, which ultimately impacts the latter's purchasing intentions and their acceptance to the set pricings. The focus of this study is on the purchasing intentions of the consumers and not their behaviors due to the former having greater implications, i.e., the potential for purchasing intentions to be positively linked to one's eventual actions (Hung et al., 2011).

This study also seeks to examine the influence of consumer engagement via individual Instagram pages on other potential clients' purchasing intentions and ultimately their acceptance to the pricings set by particular fashion startups. Here price acceptance relates to the total amount of money that consumers are comfortable paying for a product offering, in comparison with other similar products (Aaker, 1996).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions listed below serve as the starting point of this study:

1. What type of SMMC do Malaysian fashion startups adopt for their Instagram social media platform?
2. What is the effect of the Malaysian fashion startups' SMMC on consumer engagement online, over the Instagram social media platform?
3. What is the effect of consumers' engagement online with fashion startups on their purchasing intentions and price acceptance?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To gain a deeper understanding of the SMMC adopted by Malaysian fashion startups on their Instagram social media platform.
2. To gain a deeper understanding of the effect of the Malaysian fashion startups' SMMC on consumer engagement online, over the Instagram social media platform.
3. To gain a deeper understanding of the effect of consumers' engagement online with fashion startups on their purchasing intentions and price acceptance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

There are four potential contributions of this study's findings to the available literature:

1. The Instagram social media platform is leveraged to examine SMMC based on Sharing, Personalization, Popularity, and Interactivity.
2. Consumer engagement online is studied based on Schivinski's (2016) concept of consuming, contributing and co-creating.
3. The effect of the 2nd order construct of consumer engagement on the consumers' behavioral intentions (purchasing intentions and acceptance to set pricings) is explored.
4. The study bridges the gap concerning consumer engagement and provides empirical evidence of this phenomenon serving as a mediating factor.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Five main sections make up this chapter, with the first section being related to one of this study's primary constructs, i.e., Social Media Marketing Campaigns (SMMC). The chapter begins with an exploration of the social media concept, along with the various social media platforms that are in existence today. In addition, this section elaborates on the concept of social media marketing by focusing on the diverse components related to this phenomenon as seen in the available literature. Lastly, this section defines the SMMC components of this study as a means to provide an outlook of the study's internal basis.

The subsequent section pertains to this study's other primary construct, i.e., consumer engagement online (CEO). It begins by elaborating on the engagement concept and then goes on to elaborate on the concept of Consumer Engagement (CE) as defined by earlier studies. This section also delineates the various diverse dimensions concerning the concept of (CE).

The third section revolves around the notions of consumers' purchasing intentions as well as price acceptance, highlighting the various different definitions found in the available literature. The next section holistically discusses the phenomenon of fashion startups and introduces the term brand names.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN GENERAL

According to Nambisan and Baron (2007) and Wang et al. (2012), the development of social media platforms has had a substantial influence on the manner in which people communicate with one another for the better. In the context of the internet, the term "social media" refers to a collection of web-based services that create an environment in which users are able to construct their own personal profiles and networks while also accessing the personal profiles and networks of other users (boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Unlike traditional media, social media facilitates user interactivity, collaboration, and content-sharing.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media platforms can be seen as web-based services which allow people to create online profiles, connect, share, and consume content (Jayasuriya, 2018). These platforms have rapidly evolved into vital tools for businesses due to their cost-effectiveness and ability to reach a large audience.

Some widely adopted platforms include:

- **Facebook (FB):** Used for relationship management, advertising, and direct communication with customers (Holten et al., 2016).
- **Instagram:** A photo- and video-sharing platform owned by Meta Platforms, known for its visual storytelling capabilities, trending content, and direct consumer interactions (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019).
- **YouTube:** A video-based platform facilitating content creation, consumer interaction, and influencer-driven marketing (Smith et al., 2012).

For this study, Instagram was chosen due to its growing prominence in the fashion industry and its capacity for high consumer engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media marketing (SMM) leverages Web 2.0 technologies to enable two-way communications between brands and consumers (Kaplan, 2010). Unlike traditional marketing, SMM fosters interactivity, collaboration, and user-generated content to influence purchasing behaviors.

Businesses employ SMM as a means to:

1. **Enhance Brand Awareness:** Engaging visuals and storytelling.
2. **Drive Consumer Engagement:** Facilitating interactions through sharing, commenting, and liking posts.
3. **Build Customer Loyalty:** Through consistent content personalization and responsiveness.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGNS (SMMC)

SMMC are interactive marketing strategies focused on engaging users through personalized and trend-driven content. They involve four main components (Kim & Ko, 2012; Ibrahim et al., 2022):

1. **Sharing:** Disseminating content to target audiences.
2. **Personalization:** Tailoring messages to specific audience preferences.
3. **Interactivity:** Encouraging user participation through feedback and responses.
4. **Popularity:** Creating trending and viral campaigns to attract attention.

Prior studies (Moslehpour et al., 2020; Ebrahim, 2020) have shown that SMMC influence consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchasing behaviors.

THE NOTION OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Consumer engagement (CE) refers to consumers' behavioral activities with a brand, such as consuming, contributing, and co-creating content (Schivinski et al., 2016). CE is vital for fostering brand loyalty, increasing purchase intentions, and building stronger relationships between businesses and consumers.

The three stages of CE include:

1. **Consuming:** Passive activities such as viewing or liking content.
2. **Contributing:** Active behaviors like sharing or commenting on posts.
3. **Co-creating:** Generating brand-related content, such as reviews or posts.

Scholars like Kim & Ko (2010) emphasize CE's role in driving brand trust and encouraging word-of-mouth promotions.

PURCHASING INTENTIONS

Purchasing intention refers to a consumer's conscious plan to buy a specific product (Spears et al., 2004). It is influenced by consumer trust, product perception, and marketing efforts (Hung et al., 2011). Higher purchasing intentions are often a precursor to actual purchases.

PRICE ACCEPTANCE

Price acceptance pertains to the extent to which consumers perceive a product's price as fair or acceptable compared to similar offerings (Aaker, 1996). Fashion startups, known for their exclusivity and high pricing, rely heavily on perceived quality and brand uniqueness to justify premium prices (Hudders et al., 2013)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological approach undertaken in this study to examine the relationships between social media marketing campaigns (SMMC), consumer engagement, purchase intentions, and price acceptance. The research employs a quantitative design to ensure a systematic and empirical examination of the hypothesized relationships. This section details the study's overall research design, data collection process, sampling methods, instruments used, and data analysis techniques.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

The study adopts a quantitative research approach, which allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to generalize findings across the target population. A survey-based method was chosen as it enables the gathering of numerical data efficiently from a large sample of respondents. The target population comprises Malaysian consumers who actively follow and engage with local fashion startups on Instagram.

To collect the primary data, an online questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, ensuring accessibility to the intended respondents. The survey was divided into several sections, with questions designed to measure key constructs, including SMMC components (sharing, personalization, interactivity, and popularity), consumer engagement behaviors (consuming, contributing, and co-creating), purchase intentions, and price acceptance. All responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”

Prior to the full-scale survey, a pilot test involving 30 participants was conducted to validate the clarity, structure, and reliability of the questionnaire items. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine ambiguous questions and ensure the instrument’s suitability for the study.

SAMPLING STRATEGY AND PARTICIPANTS

The sampling method employed for this study is non-probability convenience sampling, which was deemed appropriate given the constraints of time and resources. This method involves selecting respondents who are readily accessible and meet the inclusion criteria, specifically Malaysian Instagram users who actively engage with fashion startups.

To achieve a reliable and robust analysis, the study adhered to the minimum sample size guidelines recommended for structural equation modeling (SEM). According to Hair et al. (2010), a sample size of at least 200 respondents is adequate for SEM analysis. This study surpassed the minimum threshold by collecting 385 valid responses, ensuring sufficient data for hypothesis testing and model validation.

The respondents consisted of a diverse group in terms of demographics, including gender, age, education level, and income. These demographic factors were summarized to provide context to the research findings while maintaining the study’s focus on the key variables of interest.

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS AND RELIABILITY

The measurement items used in this study were adapted from validated scales developed in prior research. The constructs under investigation include SMMC components, consumer engagement, purchase intentions, and price acceptance. Each construct was operationalized as follows:

- Social Media Marketing Campaign Components: Items measuring sharing, personalization, interactivity, and popularity were adapted from Kim and Ko (2012).
- Consumer Engagement: The behavioral dimensions of engagement—consuming, contributing, and co-creating—were measured using items derived from Schivinski et al. (2016).
- Purchase Intentions: Items measuring consumers’ likelihood of purchasing from fashion startups were drawn from Spears and Singh (2004).
- Price Acceptance: Perceptions of price fairness and acceptability were measured using items adapted from Aaker (1996).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, a Cronbach’s Alpha test was conducted to assess internal consistency, with values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was evaluated using composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results derived from the data analysis conducted for this study. It covers demographic profiling of respondents, descriptive statistics, measurement model evaluation, and structural model analysis to test the hypotheses.

RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The current research sample consists of Malaysian consumers who use the Instagram social media platform and who are followers of Malaysian fashion startup brands. A total of 385 questionnaires were collected and examined for responses that were valid. The characteristics of the respondents were examined across four distinct domains: individual demographics, household demographics, the contexts of fashion startups in Malaysia, and respondents' engagement with fashion startups on Instagram.

Based on the acquired data, the majority of the respondents were female, accounting for 65%, while the remaining 35% were male. The findings reveal a significant disparity in gender responses, indicating a greater inclination of female consumers toward engaging with fashion startups on Instagram. The largest proportion of respondents fell within the 25–34 age group, accounting for 54.2%, while respondents under 25 made up 11.3%. No responses were recorded from individuals aged 45–54 and those above 55. The sample was highly educated, with 51.8% holding university degrees and 38.3% possessing postgraduate qualifications. A smaller fraction had secondary school qualifications or college diplomas.

MEASUREMENT MODEL ASSESSMENT

The measurement model was assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study. This process involved evaluating internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Internal consistency was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with both values exceeding the threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where all constructs recorded AVE values above 0.50, confirming that the measurement items adequately represent their respective constructs. Discriminant validity was verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, ensuring that the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs. This comprehensive assessment confirms the reliability and validity of the measurement model, ensuring the robustness of the constructs used in the analysis.

STRUCTURAL MODEL ASSESSMENT

The structural model was evaluated to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the constructs. Key model fit indices were examined, including the Chi-square (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The results indicated a good model fit with χ^2/df values less than 3, CFI and TLI values exceeding 0.90, and RMSEA below 0.08. Path coefficients were analyzed to test the study hypotheses. The findings confirmed significant positive relationships between Social Media Marketing Campaigns (SMMC) and consumer engagement, as well as between consumer engagement and purchase intentions and price acceptance. Personalization demonstrated the strongest effect on consumer engagement, emphasizing the importance of tailored marketing strategies. The R^2 values for consumer engagement, purchase intentions, and price acceptance indicated that the model explained a substantial portion of the variance in these constructs, supporting the study's conceptual framework.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

The results of hypothesis testing confirmed the study's conceptual framework. All six hypotheses were supported, demonstrating significant relationships among the constructs. Specifically, sharing ($\beta = 0.26, p < 0.05$), personalization ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.01$), interactivity ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.05$), and popularity ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.05$) significantly influenced consumer engagement. In turn, consumer engagement significantly impacted purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$) and price acceptance ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.05$). These findings validate the theoretical model and emphasize the critical role of social media marketing campaigns in shaping consumer behavior.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, the findings confirm that social media marketing campaigns on Instagram significantly influence consumer engagement, which in turn drives purchase intentions and price acceptance. Personalization emerged as the most impactful SMMC component, emphasizing the value of customized and engaging content in building stronger relationships with consumers. These insights provide empirical evidence supporting the hypothesized relationships and highlight the strategic importance of leveraging SMMC to achieve positive behavioral outcomes for fashion startups.

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient (β)	p-value	Result
SMMC → Consumer Engagement (Sharing)	0.26	< 0.05	Supported
SMMC → Consumer Engagement (Personalization)	0.42	< 0.01	Supported
SMMC → Consumer Engagement (Interactivity)	0.31	< 0.05	Supported
SMMC → Consumer Engagement (Popularity)	0.24	< 0.05	Supported
Consumer Engagement → Purchase Intentions	0.38	< 0.01	Supported
Consumer Engagement → Price Acceptance	0.31	< 0.05	Supported

V. CONCLUSION

This section summarizes the findings of the study, discusses the implications of the results for both theory and practice, identifies the study's limitations, and provides recommendations for future research. The study sought to examine the relationships between social media marketing campaigns (SMMC), consumer engagement, purchase intentions, and price acceptance, focusing on Malaysian fashion startups using Instagram as the primary marketing platform.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of social media marketing campaigns in enhancing consumer engagement and driving behavioral outcomes. The results revealed that the four key components of SMMC—sharing, personalization, interactivity, and popularity—significantly influence consumer engagement on Instagram. Among these components, personalization emerged as the most impactful factor, highlighting the importance of delivering tailored content that resonates with the needs and preferences of target audiences.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated that consumer engagement plays a critical role in influencing purchase intentions and price acceptance. Higher levels of engagement, particularly in the form of consuming, contributing, and co-creating content, lead to stronger purchase intentions and greater acceptance of product prices. These findings validate the research framework and emphasize the interconnected roles of SMMC, engagement, and behavioural outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study advances understanding of how social media marketing campaigns (SMMC) influence consumer engagement, purchase intentions, and price acceptance. It provides empirical evidence supporting the strategic role of Instagram marketing for Malaysian fashion startups. The findings of this study hold significant implications for both academics and practitioners in the field of marketing. For academics, the validated model provides a framework for further research on the influence of social media marketing on consumer behavior. Future studies could explore different social media platforms or expand the demographic scope to include diverse markets. For practitioners,

particularly fashion startup owners, the results underscore the importance of investing in personalized, interactive, and engaging content on Instagram. Implementing strategies that enhance consumer engagement can directly impact purchase intentions and price acceptance. Brands are encouraged to use data-driven insights to tailor their marketing campaigns, leveraging the power of personalization to build stronger connections with consumers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study's sample was limited to Malaysian consumers who actively use Instagram and follow fashion startup brands. This demographic focus restricts the generalizability of the findings to other social media platforms, industries, or regions. Future research could explore broader populations, including users from different countries or those engaging with various product categories.

Second, the data collected was cross-sectional, capturing responses at a single point in time. This design limits the ability to infer causality between social media marketing campaigns and consumer behaviour. Longitudinal studies would offer more robust insights into how consumer engagement evolves over time and its sustained impact on purchase intentions and price acceptance. Third, the study primarily relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability bias or inaccurate recall. Incorporating behavioural data or experimental methods in future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer responses to marketing strategies. Lastly, the study focused on four components of social media marketing campaigns—sharing, personalization, interactivity, and popularity. While these elements are significant, other factors like influencer endorsements, user-generated content, and platform algorithms may also play crucial roles in shaping consumer engagement. Future studies should consider these additional factors to develop a more holistic view of social media marketing effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should consider expanding the sample to include diverse demographics across different social media platforms and industries to enhance the generalizability of findings. Examining consumers from various cultural and geographic backgrounds could provide deeper insights into how social media marketing campaigns influence consumer behaviour globally. Longitudinal studies are recommended to assess how consumer engagement with social media marketing campaigns evolves over time and its long-term effects on purchase intentions and price acceptance. Tracking consumer behaviour across different time frames would offer more robust evidence of causality and behavioral shifts.

Future studies could also adopt mixed-methods approaches by integrating quantitative data with qualitative insights. This combination could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how consumers perceive and interact with social media marketing campaigns. Additionally, researchers should explore the impact of emerging marketing strategies, such as influencer marketing, user-generated content, and platform algorithm changes, on consumer engagement and purchasing behavior. Investigating how these factors interact with established components like personalization and interactivity could offer a more holistic perspective on social media marketing effectiveness. Lastly, future research could examine the role of technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, in shaping consumer experiences and engagement with fashion startups on social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

This study provides significant insights into the impact of social media marketing campaigns (SMMC) on consumer engagement, purchase intentions, and price acceptance within the Malaysian fashion startup industry. The findings confirmed that the four components of SMMC—sharing, personalization, interactivity, and popularity—are influential drivers of consumer engagement on Instagram, with personalization having the most substantial effect.

The results further demonstrated that heightened consumer engagement positively affects purchase intentions and acceptance of product pricing, validating the conceptual framework and highlighting the interconnected roles of

marketing strategies and consumer behavior. These outcomes emphasize the importance for fashion startups to focus on creating personalized, interactive, and engaging content to build stronger connections with their target audience.

Although this study has several limitations, including its demographic scope and reliance on self-reported data, it lays a solid foundation for future research. Expanding the research framework to include diverse populations, adopting longitudinal and mixed-method approaches, and exploring emerging marketing trends can provide more comprehensive insights into consumer behavior in the digital landscape.

Overall, this study underscores the critical role of strategic social media marketing in fostering consumer engagement and driving purchasing decisions. Fashion startups that effectively leverage personalized and interactive marketing content on social media platforms can enhance their market competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth.

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