Analyzing Factors Needed in Social Media Influencer’s Characteristics in the Fashion Industry

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Abstract: In this era, the practices of marketing continue to change following the technological developments. There are many traditional marketing practices that have shifted to digital. One form of technological changes is there are many people who use social media. Because of the widespread use of social media, a phenomenon called Influencer Endorsement or Influencer Marketing has emerged. Influencer endorsement is a marketing practice where many marketers start to change celebrities to Social Media Influencers to become endorsers of their products or brands, in various industries. Marketers admit Influencer Endorsement is effective in achieving marketing objectives. On the other hand, the fashion industry in Indonesia has continued to grow rapidly in recent years. The more an industry develops, the higher the demand for organizational competitiveness. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and determine what factors are important and needed in Social Media Influencer’s characteristics in the fashion industry. These factors can then be used by fashion brands and companies to evaluate Social Media Influencers in the fashion sector before being chosen to be an endorser of fashion products. This research is a descriptive study that uses quantitative methods. The sample in this study are people residing in Indonesia who follow or subscribe to Social Media Influencers in the fashion sector. Samples were selected by the non-probability method, purposive sampling. The number of respondents in this study was 104 respondents. Then, the analysis technique used in this study is the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The number of factors used in this study are 6 factors, which have been adopted and combined by the researcher from previous studies. After conducting the analysis using EFA, there are 5 new factors that are obtained, namely Congruence, Expertise, Popularity, Trustworthiness, and Power. These are the important factors in Social Media Influencer’s characteristics in the fashion industry. Thus, the marketers should pay attention to these factors to choose the most appropriate Social Media Influencer as an endorser for fashion products.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer, Influencer Marketing, Influencer Endorsement, Fashion Industry, Factor Analysis

1. Introduction

In Indonesia, the fashion industry continues to grow over time. Its growth rose significantly, until 2019 it reached the highest growth of 18.98% [1]. Based on the report from Creative Economy Agency and Statistics Indonesia, to market the product, the majority of creative business actors, as many as 53.72% have used social media as a promotional tool [2].

In this era, social media has become an inseparable part of any marketing strategy. The increase in internet penetration in Indonesia has led to a shift in marketing technology, where many people explore the benefits of the internet as a medium to meet their needs [3]. Social media is the best context for the industrial media paradigm compared to traditional media such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines which are only one-way, static technology [4]. The advantage of social media marketing for fashion brands is that fashion is a very visual industry. It is easy to be present on many social media channels, for example, Instagram or Pinterest [5].

Influencer marketing is a type of social media marketing [6]. Based on the results of a survey conducted by BukaReview team of 100 Indonesian women aged 17-31 years who actively use Instagram as the main social media, 88.2% of them turned out to follow at least one Instagram fashion influencer account. Nearly half of the respondents were also influenced to buy items that were promoted by influencers [7]. In this era, influencer marketing is the third most effective marketing strategy in Indonesia and it has been widely used by marketers. They feel that by using an influencer marketing strategy, they can achieve marketing objectives. As much as 83% of marketers consider influencer marketing effective in achieving their marketing goals [8].

Although the influencer strategy is used well, however, there are challenges and difficulties faced by marketers and brands in influencer marketing practices, namely finding appropriate Social Media Influencers. A recent study revealed that 58% of marketing managers identified online opinions as very important, but 55% of them admitted that they have no or limited understanding of the identification of the online influencers [9]. In “The Rise of Influencers” report, 73% of respondents stated that the greatest challenge in conducting influencer marketing in the fashion industry is identifying the right influencer [10]. This problem is also found in Indonesia, as stated in another report issued by SociaBuzz, as many as 41% respondents said the biggest challenge in carrying out an influencer marketing campaign was finding the right one [8].

Afterwards, based on the background of the research above, the researcher wants to find out what factors are needed in Social Media Influencer’s characteristics in the fashion industry, so that it will be easier for marketers to find the right Social Media Influencers to market their fashion products as one of the marketing strategies to be able to compete in the market. Because the more an industry develops, the higher the demand for organizational competitiveness. Therefore, the researcher conducts a research titled: “Analyzing Factors Needed in Social Media Influencer’s Characteristics in the Fashion Industry”.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Influencer Endorsement

The use of endorsers as a source of messages in advertising campaigns is commonly used by marketers [11]–[13]. The use of endorsers is intended to provide encouragement to advertising messages to be more easily accepted by consumers and to facilitate the growth of consumers’ assurance in the product being advertised [14]. The popular form of endorsement used in advertisements is celebrity endorsements [15]. However, an endorser can also be an unidentifiable person (e.g. typical consumer), an inanimate figure, an expert, also corporations or organization [12], [16].

In recent years, it has become very popular for brands to use influencer endorsements, which also known as influencer marketing, to amplify brand content through Key Opinion Leaders [17]. In this type of marketing, the influencer promotes the brand’s products through various social media channels, such as Instagram and YouTube [18].

The influencer on Social Media is called Social Media Influencer. Social Media Influencers are people who have built a sizeable social network of people following and are seen as a regard for being a trusted tastemaker in one or several niches [19]. Companies have begun to rely on Social Media Influencers to face the huge volume of online advertising, moving away from celebrity endorsements [20]. Social Media Influencers are basically the new type of independent third-party endorser who shape the attitudes of audience through social media platforms [21]. Social Media Influencer is the new term for celebrity endorser, where he or she endorse and promote the product that has been assigned by the company [22].

2.2. Endorser’s Characteristics

Various characteristics of a perceived communication source may have a beneficial effect on message receptivity [13]. The accuracy of selecting the source of the message (endorser) can be based on the attributes attached to the endorser [23].

From reviewing numerous of previous studies, the researcher found important characteristics inherent in an endorser for the effectiveness of various marketing objectives. The researcher then combines these characteristics before doing factor analysis. These 6 characteristics have been represented and are being used in 2 studies, namely the research by Gupta et al. (2017) [24] and the research by Harly and Octavia (2014) [25]. The 6 factors which further analyzed in this study then become Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Relevance, Power, and Visibility. Therefore, the research framework is proposed as follows:

In the research conducted by Gupta et al. (2017) [24], there are 5 dimensions that the marketer should concentrate in making a choice of celebrity endorser. They are the Popularity of the celebrity, the Attractiveness of the celebrity, the Trustworthiness of the celebrity, the Expertise of the celebrity in the product class endorsed, and the Relevance of the celebrity to the product/brand being endorsed. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Harly and Octavia (2014) [25] used the VisCAP model by Rossiter and Percy which then stated again by Royan (2005:15) [26]. VisCAP model consists of Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, and Power. For the Credibility itself, the two most important aspects of it are Expertise and Trustworthiness [13].

2.1.1. Trustworthiness

Source credibility is constructed of two components, namely trustworthiness and expertise [13]. Trustworthiness is the perceived honesty, integrity, and believability of a source [27]. Meanwhile, Giffin stated that the source trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in the communicator’s intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid [28].

Based on definitions from various literatures, the researcher concludes that the Social Media Influencer’s trustworthiness is the perceived honesty, integrity, believability, and the degree of confidence in Social Media Influencer’s intent to communicate claims that he/she thinks the most valid. In this research, trustworthiness is indicated with honesty, integrity, and believability.

2.1.2. Expertise

Expertise is one of two components of the source credibility, along with trustworthiness [13]. Across literature, the concept of Expertise was presented under several different names, such as “Expertness” [11], [29]. Expertise refers to the perceived knowledge, experience, or skills possessed by an endorser as they relate to the endorsed brand [13], [23].

Based on definitions from various literatures, the researcher concludes that Social Media Influencer’s expertise is the knowledge, experience, skills, or capability of a Social Media Influencer in making accurate assertions about the product endorsed. In this research, expertise is viewed through knowledge, experience, and skills.
2.1.3. Attractiveness

When consumers perceive an endorser to be attractive, they identify with the endorser and are likely to adopt the endorser’s attitudes, behaviors, interests, or preferences [27]. The attractiveness of the source encompasses physical attractiveness, respect, and similarity. It means that he or she is considered physically attractive, respected for reasons other than physical attractiveness, or regarded as similar to the target audience in terms of any characteristics that is pertinent to a particular endorsement relationship [23]. In another literature, Erdogan (1999) [13] stated that the source attractiveness consists of three related dimensions, they are similarity, familiarity, and likeability. Similarity is described as a supposed resemblance between the source and the receiver of the message, familiarity as knowledge of the source through exposure, and likeability as affection for the source because of the source’s physical appearance and behavior. Meanwhile, in the study by Mardiani and Wardhana (2018) [30], who adopts the theory of Percy & Rossiter, attractiveness is defined by attraction. The attraction of the endorser has the attributes of physical likability, such as good-looking; non-physical likability, like the openness, funny, and natural; similarity, such as the similarity of age and hobby with the source (endorser).

Based on definitions from various literatures, the researcher concludes that the Social Media Influencer’s attractiveness is the physical and non-physical likability, also the perceived similarity of the source (Social Media Influencers) to the recipient (Followers). In this research, the attractiveness is viewed through whether the Social Media Influencer is good-looking, the naturalness of them, and also value similarity that the Social Media Influencers and the followers shared.

2.1.4. Relevance

In other studies, the concept of relevance is stated with “The Match-Up Hypothesis” [13], [31]. Relevance is whether the endorser has relevancy, similarity, or is there a meaningful link to the product/brand being endorsed [24].

Based on definitions from various literatures, the researcher concludes that the Social Media Influencer’s relevance is the fit between the Social Media Influencer and the product being endorsed. In this research, the relevance is viewed through the relevancy, similar characteristics, and a meaningful link between Social Media Influencer and the product/brand being endorsed.

2.1.5. Visibility

In another literatures, the concept of visibility was presented under a different name, which is “Popularity” [24], [32]. Visibility is how well-known or recognizable the endorser is from public exposure [33]. It is the state where the endorser is being noticed by the audience [34]. Meanwhile, according to John R. Rossiter in [14], visibility refers to how far an endorser’s popularity is. When linked in popularity, it can be determined by how many fans do the endorser has and how often he or she appears in front of the audience [30].

Based on definitions from various literatures, the researcher concludes that the visibility is the popularity of the Social Media Influencer. In this research, visibility is viewed through how well-known the Social Media Influencer is, his or her appearance frequency, and also his or her number of followers.

2.1.6. Power

Power is the endorser's ability to attract consumers to buy [14]. In another literature, it views as the extent to which an endorser’s perceived ability to instill compliance on the part of target audience [33].

Based on those literatures, the researcher concludes that the Social Media Influencer’s power is his or her ability to persuade and attract potential consumers to consider or buy the endorsed product. In this research, power is measured with the persuasiveness of the Social Media Influencer, also his/her ability to give advice and confidence to the followers about the product.

3. Methodology

This research uses quantitative method. Quantitative method is an approach that makes it possible to record and analyze the exact research data and analyze it using non-parametric statistical calculations [35]. For the data analysis technique, this research uses the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The population in this research is people residing in Indonesia who follow or subscribe to one or more Social Media Influencers in the field of fashion. The sampling method used is the non-probability method, purposive sampling. By using the Bernoulli formula, the minimum sample determined is as many as 100. This research uses questionnaire as its survey method. The measuring scale used is the likert scale, ranging from the number of 1 to 5. The data is then collected with as many as 104 respondents.

4. Results

The factor analysis process is started with assessing which variables can be included in the next analysis. The types of variables that can be included in the next analysis are variables that have a high enough correlation with other variables so that they can group and form a new factor. Valid respondent data were obtained from questionnaires that the researcher had distributed, totaling as many as 104 respondents.

From the questionnaire that was distributed, it can be seen the characteristics of the respondents. Based on gender, as much as 70.2% of the total respondents are female and 29.8% are male. Based on age, the majority of respondents are in the age range ≥21–25 years old as much as 76%, then followed by respondents in the age range ≥15–20 years old as much as 19.2%, and the age range of ≥26–37 years old as much as 4.8% of the total respondents. Based on domicile, most respondents live in Provincial Capital and Surrounding Areas as much as 39.4%. Furthermore, 35.6% of the total respondents live in Regency/City Capital and Surrounding Areas and as much as 25% live in Metropolitan City. Then,
the majority of respondents had a Junior/Senior High School as their latest education as much as 63.5% and then followed by a Diploma/Bachelor Degree as much as 34.6%, then a Master/Doctoral Degree as much as 1.9%. Based on occupation, respondents are dominated by Students with a percentage of 84.6%, followed by Private Employees of 8.7%, then State-Owned Enterprise Employees and Entrepreneurs of 2.9% each, and Lecturer/Teacher of 1%

The data that has been obtained is then processed by inputting it into IBM SPSS 25 software. Based on the results of the factor analysis, 5 new factors were obtained which were formed with new variables in it. Grouping is based on factor loading values. The following is five new factors that are formed:

1) Congruence
This first factor has an eigenvalue value of 5.897 and the percentage contribution is 32.762%. This factor includes 4 variable items, they are: I think it is important for a fashion influencer to have meaningful link towards the fashion product (0.740), I think it is important for a fashion influencer to have knowledge about the fashion products being promoted (0.699), and I think it is important for a fashion influencer to be well-experienced in the fashion products being promoted (0.580).

2) Expertise
This second factor has an eigenvalue of 2.225 and a percentage of contributions of 12.362%. This factor includes 4 variable items, among them: I think it is important for a fashion influencer to have believability (0.774), I think it is important for fashion influencer to has honesty (0.794), I think it is important for fashion influencer to be well-known (0.765), and I think it's important for a fashion influencer to be well-known (0.669).

3) Popularity
This third factor has an eigenvalue of 1.296 and a percentage contribution of 7.2%. This factor includes 3 variable items, including: I think it is important for a fashion influencer to has believability (0.794), I think it is important for fashion influencer to be well-known (0.765), and I think it's important for a fashion influencer to frequently appears in various media (0.669).

4) Trustworthiness
This fourth factor has an eigenvalue of 1.162 and a contribution percentage of 6.457%. This factor includes 4 variable items, including: I think it is important for a fashion influencer to be convincing potential buyers of the promoted fashion products (0.717), I think it is important for a fashion influencer to have persuasiveness in promoting the fashion products (0.570), and I think it is important for a fashion influencer to has integrity (0.512).

5) Power
This fifth factor has an eigenvalue of 1.134 and a contribution percentage of 6.298%. This factor includes 2 variable items, including: I think it is important for a fashion influencer to be able to provide advice on promoted fashion products (0.754) and I think it is important for a fashion influencer to promote fashion products naturally (0.641).

The results of this study indicate that there have been changes in the variables in each of the new factors that are formed when compared with the previous factors. These five new factors experience an increase or decrease in the number of variables originating from different factors.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusions Based on the Newly Formed Factors

The conclusions were obtained from the results of the of 104 people residing in Indonesia who follow or subscribe to one or more Social Media Influencers in the field of fashion. However, since this study is conducted using responses from people which most of them are approached by the researcher because they have criteria that is according to the qualifications needed, it limits the generalizability of the findings.

The factor analysis process that has been carried out by processing respondent data yields 5 important factors on the characteristics of a Social Media Influencer in the fashion field. The newly formed factors undergo variable changes with the addition or reduction of the number of variables derived from each different factor. New factors that have been formed are:

1) Congruence
2) Expertise
3) Popularity
4) Trustworthiness
5) Power

The dominant and is considered the most important factor in the characteristics of a Social Media Influencer in the fashion industry is Congruence Factor. Congruence Factor has the highest variance value among the 4 other new factors. The Congruence Factor variance value is 5.897 or 32.762% with “I think it is important for a fashion influencer to have meaningful link towards the fashion product” as the most dominant variable in this factor. Congruence means that the Social Media Influencer who is going to be the endorser of fashion products should be relevant to the product, and also the audience in terms of fashion value.

Next, the Expertise Factor is in the second place with the value of variance 2.225 (12.362%). The most dominant variable for this factor is “I think it is important for a fashion influencer to has believability”.

After that, the Popularity Factor is in the third place with the value of variance 1.296 (7.2%). This factor has “I think it is important for a fashion influencer to has a lot of followers on social media” as the most dominant variable.
Subsequently, the Trustworthiness Factor is in the fourth place with variance value of 1.162 (6.457%). The most dominant variable in this factor is “I think it is important for a fashion influencer to has honesty”.

Finally, Power Factor is in the last place with the value of variance 1.134 (6.298%). The most dominant variable in this factor is “I think it is important for a fashion influencer to be able to give advice on promoted fashion products”.

5.2. Suggestions for Indonesia’s Fashion Industry

This research provides guidance to marketers about what factors are the most important and requires more attention in choosing a Social Media Influencer as an endorser in the fashion sector. The results of this study indicate that among the various dimensions of the character of Social Media Influencers in the field of fashion, the Congruence Factor is the most important thing to consider in making the decision to choose Social Media Influencer as an endorser for fashion products. Congruence factor is the combination of several variable items which stated that Social Media Influencers must relevant to the product being promoted and also relevant to the audience (Followers) in terms of fashion value. Then, it is followed by the Expertise, Popularity, Trustworthiness, and Power Factors in the order of importance. For the Expertise, the Social Media Influencer should be believable, having knowledge, adequate skills, and well-experienced in the fashion products being promoted. For Popularity, it is important for Social Media Influencer to has a lot of followers, to be well-known, and to frequently appears in various media. For Trustworthiness, it is important for Social Media Influencer to has honesty, can convince and persuade the potential buyers about the promoted fashion products, and for the Social Media Influencer to has integrity. For Power, it is important for Social Media Influencer to be able to give advice on promoted fashion products and to promotes fashion products naturally.

5.3. Suggestions for the Academics

1) The results of this study are from the data collection of 104 respondents in Indonesia. Future studies can explore the results of this study for other regions or countries because of the possibility of cultural differences that can affect the research results. Therefore, it can provide a comprehensive understanding of followers' perceptions of Social Media Influencers in the field of fashion in different cross-cultures.

2) This research focuses on factors that are considered important in the characteristics of a Social Media Influencer as an endorser in the field of fashion. Future research can study these factors on more specific fashion brands or categories.

References


across the Data Stream,” 2015.


