

# The Role of Credible Social Media Influencers in Brand Attitude, eWOM, and Purchase Intention

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## ABSTRACT

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Social media is among the most dominant digital activities today, with over 5 billion global users in 2024, projected to reach 6 billion by 2028 (Jo Dixon, 2024a). Users spend an average of 2 hours and 23 minutes daily across platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Kemp, 2024). In Malaysia, where social media penetration is 83.1%, platforms like Pinterest and Instagram are increasingly influential in Gen Z's shopping decisions (MacRae, 2024). Influencer marketing is expanding rapidly, with global spending reaching USD 30.8 billion in 2023. Instagram leads in usage by marketers (89%), followed by YouTube (70%) and Facebook (45%) (West, 2024). Despite this growth, Malaysian consumers are becoming more selective, emphasizing credibility and relevance. Engagement rates for macro- and mega-influencers have declined to just 1.3%, compared to 4.7% for nano-influencers (Taslaud, 2024). While 62% of Malaysians are influenced by celebrity endorsements, only 75% proceed to purchase (Mail, 2024), with 74% preferring unbiased reviews and ratings (Siddharta, 2023). Trust issues persist due to fraudulent influencer behavior (Keane, 2024), and only 33% of Malaysians find generic content like unboxing or reviews appealing (Taslaud, 2024). In health and beauty, 42% prioritize product quality over endorsements (Vodus, 2024).

JEL Codes:

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