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# Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Decisions: A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Social Media Trends

**Nurul Bariyah Ibrahim[1]*, Fara Nabila Faizal Reza [2], Shamsunarnie Mohamed Zukri [3] , Nor Hazreeni Hamzah[4], Nur Safwati Ibrahim[5], and Noor Zafarina Mohd Fauzi[6]**

[1,2,3,4,5,6]Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kelantan, Bukit Ilmu, Machang, Kelantan, Malaysia

Authors' email: bariyah@uitm.edu.my* , shamsunarnie077@uitm.edu.my, reeni683@uitm.edu.my, safwa541@uitm.edu.my, zafarina@uitm.edu.my

*Corresponding author

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**Abstract**: This study examines the influence of social media trends on consumer buying decisions among students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kota Bharu. Key factors investigated include social media engagement, influencer marketing, fashion consciousness, peer recommendations, and trend virality. A quantitative research design was employed, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 157 respondents. The data were analysed using multiple linear regression to determine the relationship between the variables. The results indicate that social media engagement and peer recommendations significantly and positively influence consumer buying decisions, while other factors show comparatively weaker effects. These findings underscore the growing importance of social media platforms in shaping consumer behaviour among young adults. The study provides practical implications for marketers and businesses to enhance digital marketing strategies by leveraging interactive engagement and peer-driven influence in an increasingly social media-centric marketplace.

**Keywords**: Consumer Buying, Social Media, Trend Virality

## 1 Introduction

With the advent of the digital era, the evolution of social media platforms has significantly influenced consumers' purchasing decisions. Social media has revolutionised the way people discover, engage with, and purchase products, making it an integral part of modern communication. As marketing aims to achieve customer satisfaction and profitability, consumer buying behaviour remains a central concern in contemporary marketing [1]. The success of a marketing strategy largely depends on the buying decisions of its target consumers. According to Muturi [2], platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok play a pivotal role in facilitating word-of-mouth communication and driving trends. Social media marketing has thus evolved into an essential tool for businesses to build brand awareness and foster consumer engagement. By enabling real-time interaction, these platforms empower brands to shape consumer preferences effectively [3].

The increasing use of social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram, among university students has intensified impulsive buying behaviour, fuelled by viral trends, influencer marketing, and peer recommendations [4]. This demographic, often highly engaged in online communities, is particularly susceptible to the fear of missing out (FOMO), leading to quick purchasing decisions driven more by social validation than by actual needs [2]. While such purchases may provide short-term

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satisfaction, they frequently result in buyer's remorse, guilt, and financial strain outcomes that are especially concerning for students with limited income [5].

Social media-driven marketing further amplifies these behaviours through targeted content, limited-time offers, and seamless online purchasing options [6]. The convenience of digital transactions and constant exposure to trends reduce students' ability to make well-informed choices, increasing the risk of purchases that do not align with their real needs or long-term financial priorities [7]. Given the growing prevalence of these patterns, there is a pressing need to examine how social media trends shape purchasing behaviour among university students and to identify strategies that promote more informed and responsible consumer decisions.

## 2 Literature Review

### *A The Effect of Social Media Trend on Young Consumer Buying Decision*

Globally, the emergence of social media platforms has transformed the way younger consumers make purchasing decisions. As digital natives, young consumers are more influenced by social media due to their high level of engagement with these platforms. According to Kim and Niehm [8], the perceived quality of information shared online significantly shapes consumer recommendations and purchase intentions, highlighting the crucial role of cognitive responses in e-commerce. The purchasing behaviour of the target market, whether individually or collectively, ultimately determines the effectiveness of marketing strategies [1]. For young consumers, social media serves as a powerful space for discovery and validation, where likes, comments, and shares reinforce their choices. Gul and Shahzad [9] further emphasise that social media is not merely a communication channel but also a valuable tool for pre-purchase research, enabling young consumers to make informed decisions through interactions in virtual communities, blogs, and online discussions.

In addition, social media has amplified the influence of digital trends and peer recommendations on consumer behaviour. Influencer marketing, as noted by Ilieva et al. [3], has become a vital element of consumer engagement, with influencer endorsements often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional advertising. This shift has altered consumer preferences and contributed to higher conversion rates. Moreover, the integration of shopping features within social media platforms has lowered purchasing barriers, making the transition from browsing to buying seamless. As a whole, these developments highlight the global impact of social media as a transformative force in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour [9].

Manandhar [1] highlights that in Malaysia, consumers often base their purchase decisions on trust in a brand, which is strongly influenced by the brand's online presence and social media engagement. The sense of community fostered through social media interactions further enhances this effect, making consumers more inclined to purchase after engaging with brands on these platforms. However, research examining the role of social media as a marketing tool in influencing consumer buying decisions, particularly when mediated by brand image in the fashion apparel industry, remains limited within the Malaysian context [10].

Social media has significantly reshaped consumer decision-making and enabled marketers to craft more effective strategies for brand growth [10]. Beyond promoting visibility, it enhances brand image and directly influences consumers' purchase intentions. In Malaysia, consumer behaviour is, therefore, strongly shaped by how brands manage their social media presence and cultivate brand identity, underscoring the growing importance of digital marketing in driving purchasing behaviour [1].

### *B Social Media Engagement*

Social media engagement refers to the interaction and participation of consumers with brands or products on digital platforms, often demonstrated through activities such as liking, commenting, sharing, and creating user-generated content. Toor et al. [11] emphasise that consumer engagement on social media is essential in fostering emotional bonds between brands and their audiences. Existing evidence shows that such engagement significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviour. Dessart et al. [12] found that highly engaged consumers are more likely to develop positive brand associations and exhibit stronger loyalty, which directly shapes their purchase decisions.

In addition, social media engagement plays a critical role in building consumer trust and influencing purchase intentions. Liu and Ooi [7] report that consumers who actively engage with brands on social media tend to place greater trust in those brands. Their findings further suggest that high levels of engagement can strengthen brand identification and encourage impulsive purchases. Beyond entertainment, consumers increasingly rely on social media as a primary source of information and recommendations before making buying decisions. As a result, businesses that strategically utilise these platforms can deliver more personalised and interactive experiences, foster deeper engagement, and enhance consumer loyalty.

### *C Influencer Marketing*

Influencer marketing is a form of digital advertising that fosters brand loyalty through the reputation, endorsements, and popularity of celebrities or social media personalities [3]. With the rise of social media platforms, it has become a prominent strategy for brand promotion and sales generation. The COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly increased online activity due to lockdowns and restrictions, further accelerated the use of online influencers as essential marketing tools for brands seeking to connect with their audiences [3].

According to Müller et al. [13], influencer credibility is a critical determinant of purchase intention, as consumers are more likely to be persuaded by influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable or relatable. In addition, factors such as the perceived usefulness of the product and the emotional appeal of influencer content play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase behaviour. Influencer marketing also benefits from content reuse, which extends a brand's reach to an influencer's audience while being more cost-efficient than depending only on internal creative teams [14]. De Veirman et al. [15] further note that when influencers effectively integrate emotional appeals with rational product benefits, they enhance the purchase intention among followers. The blend of trustworthiness, expertise, and emotional resonance thus positions influencer marketing as a powerful and increasingly preferred strategy for brands to strengthen engagement and drive sales.

### *D Fashion Consciousness*

Fashion consciousness is a significant factor influencing consumer behaviour, as clothing and accessories often serve as expressions of identity. According to Sritanakorn and Nuangjamnong [16], fashion-conscious individuals actively keep up with new fashion items to maintain social status or express themselves. This group tends to be highly active on social media platforms and susceptible to impulse buying when exposed to fashion-oriented content. For these consumers, fashion consciousness represents more than an interest in style, but it reflects a desire for social validation through alignment with the latest fashion trends.

Fashion-conscious consumers also seek affirmation from peers, making social media a powerful medium for reinforcing fashion choices. As noted by Sritanakorn and Nuangjamnong [16], these individuals are influenced not only by their personal preferences but also by the styles adopted by others, especially those they follow online. In Malaysia, cultural and media influences further shape the lifestyle preferences of fashion-conscious consumers, driving them toward new purchasing behaviours [17]. The continuous stream of fashion-related content on social media prompts quick purchasing decisions to remain stylish and relevant within social circles. Consequently, these individuals are not only inclined to follow trends but also to engage with brands and influencers that reflect their interests. This pursuit of social validation, coupled with the instant gratification offered by social media, plays a central role in shaping the purchasing patterns of fashion-conscious consumers [16].

### *E Peer Recommendation*

Peer recommendations play a significant role in shaping consumer buying decisions, particularly in the context of social media, where personal experiences and opinions are widely shared across platforms. Studies consistently indicate that consumers tend to place greater trust in product recommendations from peers, whether they are close friends, family members, or acquaintances within online communities, compared to traditional advertising methods. Khan et al. [18] highlight that peer influence exerts a consistent impact across different contexts in which young adults make decisions; even if it is not always the dominant factor, it remains an important one.

According to Cheung et al. [19], unlike commercials or influencer endorsements, peer recommendations are perceived as more credible because they originate from individuals with no commercial interest in the product. In situations involving brand crises, consumers often rely on the opinions of their immediate peers, and this influence can be powerful enough to reshape their perceptions of the affected brand, thereby affecting purchase intentions [20].

The concept of social proof further explains the persuasive power of peer recommendations. Cialdini [21] defines social proof as the psychological tendency of individuals to emulate the actions of others in determining appropriate behaviour for a given situation. On social media, this is reflected in various forms, including product reviews, shared posts, and user comments. Consequently, peer recommendations, whether from close friends or individuals with shared interests, will function as a form of social validation that strongly influences consumer purchasing decisions.

### *F Trend Virality*

In recent years, within a digital landscape dominated by social media and rapid internet developments, marketing strategies have increasingly focused on how content gains visibility and becomes “viral” [22]. Muturi [2] notes that platforms such as Instagram and TikTok serve as the fastest channels for trend diffusion, often propelling content to viral status within hours. These platforms amplify the spread of viral material, generating moments of heightened consumer demand. Such trends frequently result in short-term spikes in purchasing behaviour, as consumers rush to secure limited products or participate in the latest craze [22].

While product quality remains an important determinant of consumer buying decisions, social influence through viral content also plays a critical role. However, these purchase behaviours are often motivated by product-specific features and their prompt utility during decision-making, resulting in a weaker long-term association with brands [4]. For marketers, taking advantage of viral trends involves more than just utilising the visibility they create but also managing the challenge of converting short-lived attention into sustained brand loyalty. This involves creating content that resonates with target audiences while ensuring the product delivers consistent value beyond the viral peak [22].

### *G Conceptual Framework*

This conceptual framework in Fig. 1 examines the factors affecting consumer buying decisions. The dependent variable is consumer buying decision, while the independent variables are social media engagement, influencer marketing, fashion consciousness, peer recommendations, and trend virality. The framework suggests that these five factors positively influence consumers' purchasing decisions. The relationships are tested using statistical analysis to determine which factors significantly affect consumer buying decisions.

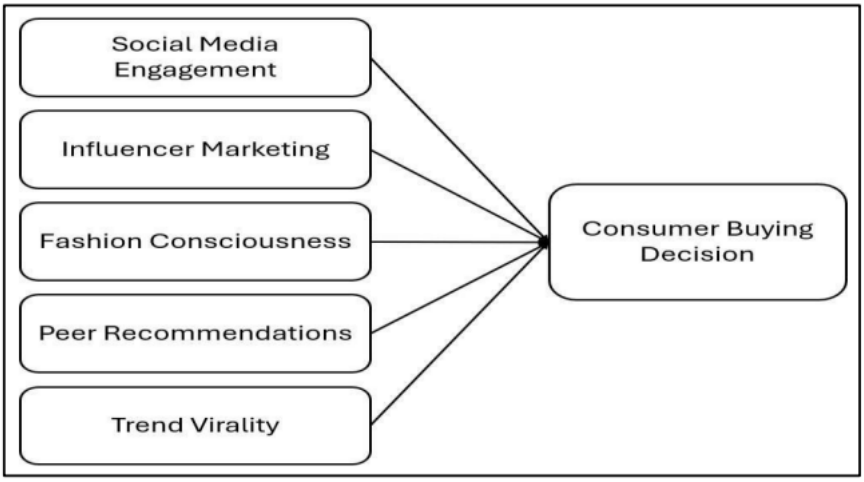


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## 3 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey method to investigate the impact of social media trends on the purchasing behaviour of university students. A cross-sectional approach was adopted to collect data at a single point in time. The target population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kelantan Branch, Kota Bharu Campus, for the semester of March 2025 to August 2025. A sample size of 157 students was determined using Raosoft Inc.'s Sample Calculator Online to ensure representativeness. A stratified random sampling technique was applied to capture respondents from six different academic programmes, with each programme serving as a stratum. Proportionate allocation was used to determine the number of respondents selected from each stratum based on its population size, ensuring that all programmes were represented according to their relative proportions. Subsequently, respondents within each stratum were selected using simple random sampling, ensuring diversity in academic backgrounds and experiences with social media.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of seven sections: (i) demographic information (ii) consumer buying decisions indicators (iii) social media engagement indicators (iv) influencer marketing indicators (v) fashion consciousness indicators (vi) peer recommendations indicators and (vii) trend virality indicators. Items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”).

The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments used in previous studies on social media influence and consumer buying decisions, with modifications to suit student context. Table 1 shows sources of the questionnaire adopted for this study.

Table 1: Questionnaire Description

| Construct | Scale | Sources |
|---|---|---|
| Demographic Profile | Multiple Choice Questions | |
| Consumer Buying Decisions | Likert-Scale Questions | [1] |
| Social Media Engagement | | [11] |
| Influencer Marketing | | [23] |
| Fashion Consciousness | | [24] |
| Peer Recommendations | | [11] |
| Trend Virality | | [22], [25] |

Collected data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise demographic data and social media usage patterns. Inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, were applied to determine the relationship between social media trends and purchasing behaviour.

In this study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the direction and strength of the associations. A subsequent t-test was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis ($H_0$: $r = 0$), which states that there is no significant relationship between social media engagement, influencer marketing, fashion consciousness, peer recommendations, trend virality, and consumer buying decisions. The corresponding p-value indicated the level of statistical significance, with results considered significant at $p < 0.05$. The formula for the t-test is as (1)

$$t = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \tag{1}$$

The computed t-value was then compared with the critical value obtained from the t-distribution table with n – 2 degrees of freedom. If the calculated t-value exceeded the critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant correlation.

Pearson's correlation coefficient quantifies the direction and strength of a linear relationship between two variables, ranging from –1 (perfect negative correlation) to +1 (perfect positive correlation), with a value of 0 indicating no linear relationship [26]. It reflects how closely data points cluster along a straight line and provides insight into the degree of scatter in the relationship.

In this study, MLR was applied to determine the combined effect of social media engagement, influencer marketing, fashion consciousness, peer recommendations, and trend virality on consumer buying decisions.

In conducting MLR analysis, multicollinearity among independent variables can complicate interpretation, as noted by Brown and Auburn [27], because high correlations between predictors may obscure their individual contributions to the model. Furthermore, key assumptions such as linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity must be satisfied to ensure the validity of the results.

The model used for the multiple linear regression is as (2)

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \varepsilon_i \tag{2}$$

where

$Y_i$ = Consumer Buying Decisions
$X_1$ = Social Media Engagement
$X_2$ = Influencer Marketing
$X_3$ = Fashion Consciousness
$X_4$ = Peer Recommendations
$X_5$ = Trend Virality
$\beta 0, \beta 1, \beta 2, \beta 3, \beta 4, \beta 5$ = The Regression Parameters
$\varepsilon_i$ = Residual on Random Error

## 4 Findings and Discussion

A survey was conducted among students at UiTM Kota Bharu, and the data were analysed using SPSS to examine consumer buying decisions. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through a pilot study, which served as a small-scale preliminary test to evaluate its effectiveness before proceeding with a larger study. Cronbach's Alpha, a common measure of internal consistency ranging from 0 to 1, was used, with values above 0.6 considered acceptable. A total of 30 participants took part in the pilot study. The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.709 to 0.894, indicating generally high internal consistency across the variables. Specifically, Influencer Marketing (0.867), Fashion Consciousness (0.894), and Trend Virality (0.888) demonstrated very high reliability. Consumer Buying Decisions (0.736), Social Media Engagement (0.709), and Peer Recommendations (0.795) also showed acceptable reliability, with values above 0.7, suggesting that these constructs were measured consistently. Overall, the findings indicate that most variables possess adequate internal consistency, supporting their suitability for further analysis.

A total of 157 respondents participated in the survey. The demographic profile of respondents showed that the majority were female (51%), while male respondents accounted for 49%. Most participants were aged 21–23 years (92.4%), followed by 18-20 years (5.7%) and above 24 years (1.9%).

Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships among the study variables. The results revealed that Influencer Marketing was positively and significantly correlated with Consumer Buying Decisions, $r = 0.467$, $p < .01$. Social Media Engagement showed the strongest correlation with Consumer Buying Decisions, $r = 0.607$, $p < .01$, while Trend Virality was also positively related, $r = 0.463$, $p < .01$. Fashion Consciousness ($r = 0.408$, $p < .01$) and Peer Recommendations ($r = 0.549$, $p < .01$) also demonstrated positive relationships with Consumer Buying Decisions. These findings indicate that higher levels of influencer exposure, fashion consciousness, trend virality, social engagement, and peer input are all associated with stronger consumer buying tendencies among students.

Prior to conducting multiple linear regression, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were tested. The results indicated that the data met the required assumptions.

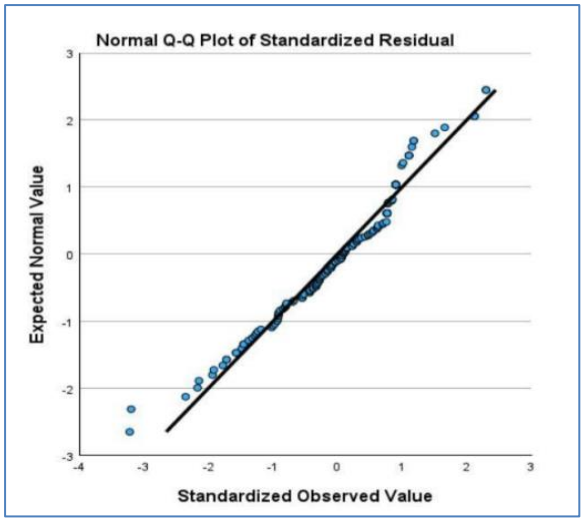


Figure 2: Q-Q plot of residual

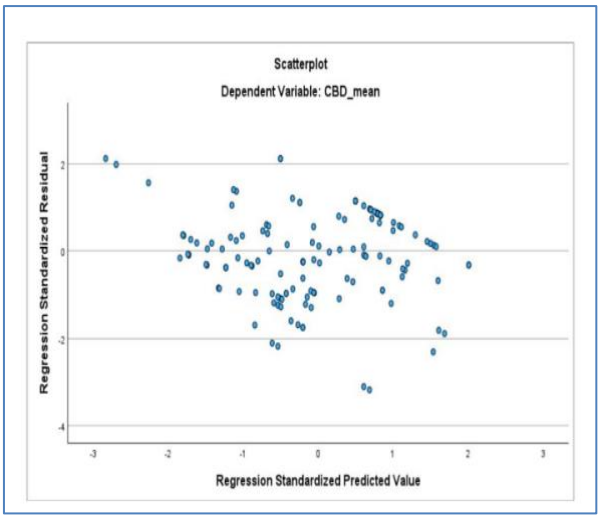


Figure 3: Residual Plot

The normality assumption was assessed using visual inspection of the Q-Q plot in Fig. 2. The residuals appeared approximately normally distributed. Linearity was confirmed through scatterplots of the standardised residuals against predicted values in Fig. 3, which showed no major deviations from linearity. The assumption of homoscedasticity was also satisfied, as the scatterplot of residuals displayed a random distribution without funnelling or systematic patterns. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all independent variables were below 10, and tolerance values exceeded 0.2, as shown in Table 2, indicating no multicollinearity issues.

Table 2: Multicollinearity Indicator

| **Construct** | **Tolerance** | **VIF** |
|---|---|---|
| Social Media Engagement | 0.798 | 1.254 |
| Influencer Marketing | 0.203 | 4.918 |
| Fashion Consciousness | 0.367 | 2.728 |
| Peer Recommendations | 0.361 | 2.772 |
| Trend Virality | 0.4 | 2.5 |

Taken together, these results suggest that the dataset met the assumptions necessary to proceed with multiple regression analysis.

Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was employed to examine the influence of social media engagement, influencer marketing, fashion consciousness, peer recommendations, and trend virality on consumer buying decisions among students in UiTM Kota Bharu Campus. The use of MLR enables the study to assess how these predictors collectively contribute to variations in consumer purchasing behaviour. The overall model is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-value of 73.038 with $R^2 = 0.493$, demonstrating that the independent variables jointly explain a significant proportion of variance in the dependent variable. The corresponding p-value ($< 0.001$) is well below the 0.05 significance threshold, further confirming the model's statistical significance. This finding indicates that the set of predictors collectively provides a meaningful and interpretable explanation of consumer buying decisions within the study context.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

| Construct | Unstandardized B | Coefficients Standard Error | t | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -0.528 | 0.756 | -0.698 | 0.486 |
| Social Media Engagement | 0.573 | 0.079 | 7.246 | <0.001 |
| Influencer Marketing | -0.221 | 0.177 | -1.250 | 0.213 |
| Fashion Consciousness | 0.240 | 0.215 | 1.118 | 0.266 |
| Peer Recommendations | 0.454 | 0.115 | 3.957 | <0.001 |
| Trend Virality | 0.078 | 0.113 | 0.693 | 0.490 |

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis predicting Consumer Buying Decisions based on five independent variables. The findings show that Social Media Engagement ($B = 0.573$, $p < 0.001$) and Peer Recommendations ($B = 0.454$, $p < 0.001$) have statistically significant positive effects on Consumer Buying Decisions, indicating that both variables strongly influence purchasing behaviour. In contrast, Influencer Marketing ($B = –0.221$, $p = 0.213$) and Fashion Consciousness ($B = 0.240$, $p = 0.266$) do not significantly predict Consumer Buying Decisions, as their p-values exceed the 0.05 significance level. Similarly, Trend Virality ($B = 0.078$, $p = 0.490$) shows no significant impact on the Consumer Buying Decisions.

The findings indicate that higher levels of social media engagement contribute positively to consumers' purchasing decisions. It's also suggesting that peer input plays an influential role in shaping buying behaviour. Both variables are statistically significant, confirming that Social Media Engagement and Peer Recommendations are strong and reliable predictors of Consumer Buying Decisions in this study.

## 5 Conclusion

The regression results indicate that among the five predictors examined, only Social Media Engagement and Peer Recommendations significantly influence consumer buying decisions. This suggests that consumers in UiTM Kota Bharu Campus place substantial importance on interactive and engaging social media content, as well as on recommendations from peers when making purchase decisions. The non-significant effects of Influencer Marketing, Fashion Consciousness, and Trend Virality imply that these factors do not independently drive purchasing behaviour within this sample, despite their prominence in contemporary marketing strategies. These findings highlight the stronger influence of authentic social interactions over trend-driven or influencer-based marketing approaches, emphasising the need for marketers to prioritise engagement-driven content and peer-based referral mechanisms to effectively shape consumer decisions.

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## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## Author Contributions

Fara Nabila and Nurul Bariyah carried out the research, refined the data and performed the data analysis using SPSS. Nurul Bariyah and Shamsunarnie composed the introduction and literature review sections. Nurul Hafizah and Nurul Bariyah also wrote the methodology section. Nor Hazreeni, Nur Safwati, Noor Zafarina wrote the result and discussion sections. Nurul Bariyah also wrote the conclusion section. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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