

The effect of social media influencer towards pro-environmental intention

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Keywords

Social Media Influencer, Endorser Attributes, Malaysia, Pro-Environment, Source Credibility

Abstract

Millennials have been found to embrace a stronger concern and interaction with social media. Thus, preference for advertising has changed in recent years, putting immense pressure on brands to consider new and innovative advertising sources. One of the most popular avenues today is using social media influencer. Relatively, previous study indicated that this generation seems to be more concern about the ecological and incline to pro-environment manner. In the literature, most studies are found to explain the use of endorsers' attribute and mainly in celebrity context. Little has been discussed on social media influencer context particularly on the non-profit settings such environmental issue. In Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, Waste Awareness Campaign has been launched in early 2018 to educate the society on waste management. The campaign requires social media influencer to spread awareness on social media in order to promote the alarming problem on waste issue. However, there is not much understanding have been made to determine the success of the said campaign. Therefore, this paper is aimed to examine the effect of using social media influencer in regard of the social media influencer attributes in promoting waste awareness among millennials to be more involved in practicing pro-environment attitude and intention. A pilot test study has been conducted. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0.

The findings show that there is a significant association between Pro-environment intention and Source Credibility (expertise & trustworthiness). This paper is expected to provide insights to social marketing researchers on the effect of social media influencer's attributes towards campaign awareness. Furthermore, this paper will serve as a guideline to social marketers and relevant authorities in designing their awareness campaigns on social media particularly on pro-environment issues.

Introduction

Waste management has become a critical issue to be solved globally. Most of the wastes are remarkably not handled in an environmentally safe approach. Thus, world generated approximately 2.01 billion municipal waste annually and expected to contribute to the 33% of increment due to 2050. "Mismanagement of waste is harming human health and environments while adding to the climate challenge. Unfortunately, it is often the poorest in society who are adversely impacted by inadequate waste management. Our resources need to be used and then reused continuously so that they do not end up in landfills", said by Laura Tuck, Vice President for Sustainable Development World Bank (Kaza et al., 2018).

In Malaysia, waste management has become a critical issue to overcome due to the rapid growth of population (Lim, 2018; Bashir et al., 2018; Shehzad et al., 2016). The average of waste production in Malaysia is about 30,000 tons daily and only 15% of that waste has been recycled (Bashir et al.2107). With that regards, statistically, the production of waste in Malaysia increased 91% from 2003 to 2013 hence consumption and disposal rates are escalating faster than Malaysia's utilities can handle (Samsudin and Don, 2103). This alarming situation on waste management prompted the Malaysian Government to include this issue from the 6th Malaysia Plan (MP) for 1991-1995 to 11th Malaysian plan 2016-2020, with an emphasis specifically on solution of waste issue to educate and enhance the society tendency to more concern about the wellbeing of nature and pro-environment attitude.

Consequently, one way to effectively create change is by placing learning program about environmental issues to society particularly in the schools, colleges and universities that represent the future generation so that they can influence the families & communities by passing all information of what have they taught (Bashir et al., 2017). Therefore, this will imply to the encouragement to bring new prospect to create attention of the societies to be more attach and concern about these critical issues. Recently, in February 2018 there is an issue highlighted by Kota Kinabalu FM (KK12FM) and Sabah Trash Hero's (NGO), introducing the social media influencer for the campaign endorser towards "Waste Awareness in Kota Kinabalu". However, the effectiveness of bringing this new prospect still uncertain.

Relatively, the developments in research on social media influencer (SMI) have seen increased attention. Given this substance, it is mainly because of the increasing number of technology adoption and the changes of people communication's interaction particularly by the millennials. Social media influencer is also seen as one of the most influencing for endorsement strategies which can contribute on people attraction on the online traffic (Freberg et al., 2011) established effective outreach strategies (Booth & Matic, 2011) and encourage substantial business return (Lim et al., 2018).

An acceptance and increasing awareness of the crucial role that social media influencer at present take part in ensuring the profitability growth for the business. Therefore, understanding on how social media influencer plays their role to achieve market competitiveness is critical in order to ensure business survival and advertising effectiveness. Moreover, people these days bias to the fast, convenient and informative consumption on the social media. Additionally, social media influencer was believed as the cost-effective endorsement strategy that can contribute to great challenging in online market (Freberg et al., 2011; Svenssen et al., 2018; Khamis et al., 2017).

However, some scholar agreed that the studies about social media influencer are still inadequate particularly by unveil on another prospect in marketing such as in non-profit orientation (Godey, 2016; Nawi, 2018). Hearn and Schoenhoff (2016) concluded that "the social media influencer works to generate a form of "celebrity" capital by cultivating as much attention as possible and crafting an authentic "personal brand" via social networks, which can subsequently be used by companies and advertisers for consumer outreach".

Literature review

Celebrity Endorser Attributes

Several literatures validated in endorsement strategy that the attribute of the endorsers is said can profoundly effect on the attitude (Seno and Lukas, 2007; Fleck et al., 2012; Wang, 2017). In famous advertising endorsement strategy, there is growing development of study that has focused on the attribute which deemed to contribute to the successful campaign regularly on celebrity endorsement such as credibility of the endorser (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1990, Amos et al., 2008; Muda et al., 2014; Annuar et al., 2018). In view of the fact, examination on social media influencer attribute study was said to be under research (Lim et al., 2018). Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of social media influencer credibility towards pro-environment intention.

Source Credibility

Source credibility is extensively used to evaluate the effectiveness of the advertising endorsement (Hoyland and Weiss 1951; Ohanian, 1990; Taghipoorreynah and de Run 2016). The credibility of the endorser towards advertisement are said to have positive effect to reviewer perception (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Source credibility contains two elements are generally discuss that is expertise and trustworthiness. Metzger et al., (2003) noted "that an endorser who perceived as highly trustworthy and expertise would lead to consumers' indifference towards the advertising message, resulting in higher acceptance of the delivered message". Trustworthiness represents an endorser's dignity, believability, and honesty (Erdogan 1999). Till and Busler (2000) stressed that expertise has a positive influence on both attitude and purchase intention. The endorser who has viewed as experts tends to be more persuasive (Aaker and Myers, 1987) and capable of driving attitude change to create intention towards the advertisement motive (Ohanian 1990). Therefore, the information presented by a credible source (e.g. social media influencers) can affect consumers' beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours (Wang et al. 2017). Relatively, social media influencers who held with high expertise and trustworthiness viewed as being more influential on their

followers' behaviors. The discussion of the credibility has been widely discussed in celebrity context but still limited in the context of social media influencer particularly in a non-profit setting.

Trustworthiness

H1a There is a positive relationship between social media influencer's trustworthiness and intention towards pro-environment Expertiseness

H1b There is a positive relationship between social media influencer's expertiseness and intention towards pro-environment

Research Model

This study espouses the Tri-Partite Model which develops the stages of conception of attitude change towards the intention and behavior. The main components of this model consist of thinking, feeling and intention/behavior, thus will become the fundamental concept to the framework creation for this study as the advertisement endorse by the social media influencer have become the stimulus towards the change of attitude and directly effect on the intention/behavior.

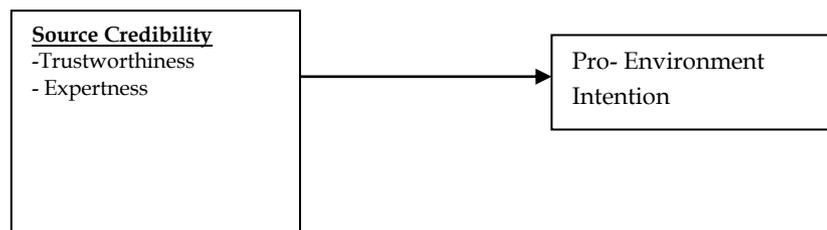


Figure 1: Research Framework

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

Those who are born between 1981 and 1996 can be categorized as a millennial (Dimock, 2018). Relatively, according to Moore (2012), "millennial has been found to embrace a stronger concern and interaction with social media and social media influencers in comparison to other generations". Thus, this study conducted a quantitative research in order to achieve the research objectives. Convenience sampling technique is used to choose the representative of millennial in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. A pilot test has been conducted to ensure the content validity of the research instruments, where 35 respondents have been selected conveniently to answer the questionnaire. All responses from the respondents are analyzed using simple statistic such frequency analysis, Reliability test, normality test and Chi-square test. Observation has been taken to ensure any errors or feedback from respondents will be noted so that revision and improvement to the questionnaire can be made. Variables of source credibility and intention towards pro-environment measured using a 5-point likert scale. Exhibit in table 1 is a frequency of respondents' profile. Respondent of this study encompass 54% of female and 46% of male. The largest age group of the sample was those who in the age of 29-39 which represent 71%. On the education background, predominantly basic degree which represent 59%, 29% master's degree, 11% Diploma holder, and the lowest 3% represent both PHD and SPM respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-28	10	29%
	29-39	25	71%
	Total	35	100%
Gender	Female	19	54%
	Male	16	46%
	Total	35	100%
Race	Malay	6	17%
	Chinese	2	6%
	Bumiputera	27	77%
	Sabah		

	Total	35	100%
Education	SPM	1	3%
Background	Diploma	4	11%
	Bachelor's degree	19	54%
	Master's degree	10	29%
	PhD	1	3%
	Total	35	100%

Notes: the data is collected based on the pilot study.

Measures

The first section in the questionnaire comprises the demographic profile. The next section represents the variables for this study. All latent variables were measured based on previously validated measurements. For this study, credibility that consists of trustworthiness ($\alpha=0.706$) and expertise ($\alpha=0.793$) dimension of endorser attributes are measured by adapting from Ohanian (1990). The 5 likert scale was measured at state level of respondent's agreement or disagreement (5=strongly agree) (4= agree) (3= neither disagree nor agree) (2 =Disagree) (1=strongly disagree). Highest value designates the greater support.

Table 2 indicates the validated measurement for the estimation procedure used to measure the variable for this study.

Table 2: Estimation Procedure

Category	Variable	Dimension	Source	Item
Dependent Variable (DV)	Pro-environment Intention	-	Lim et al., 2018	4
	Source Credibility	Expertise	Ohanian, 1990	
Independent Variable (IV)		Trustworthiness	Lim et al., 2018	3
			Ohanian, 1990	4

Findings

Table 3 shows the Inter-Item Correlation. This explains trustworthiness has strong relationship with pro-environment intention compare to expertise. The coefficient of correlation range between variable showed 55.6 percent to 79.6 percent. This indicates that, the correlation among the independent variable is relatively high and might detected with the presence of a multicollinearity problem.

Table 3: Inter-Item Correlation

	Expertise	Trustworthiness	Pro-environment Intention
Expertise	1.000	.796	.556
Trustworthiness	.796	1.000	.684
Pro-environment Intention	.556	.684	1.000

As mentioned in the methodology, as the requirement to conduct a statistical analysis, the parametric test required to fulfill the assumption of normality. Based on the normality test using shapiro-wilk (W) for both dimension p -value is at the significant result where $p < .001^{***}$. This indicates the null hypothesis on the normality test was rejected and revealed that a pilot data failed to meet the normality assumption. Therefore, the non- parametric test was conducted to test the relationship.

Table 4 above shows a chi-square test for independence. From the result above, P-Value $p < .001^{***}$ for both independent variable (expertise & trustworthiness) points out there is a significant association between the dependent variable (Pro-environment intention) and independent variable (expertise & trustworthiness).

Table 4: Chi-Square χ^2 & P-Value

	Expertise	Trustworthiness
Pro-environment Intention		
Chi square	0.000***	0.000***
P-value	(0.000) ***	(0.000) ***

Note: The value in the parentheses are p -value indicate significant at 99% (***) , 95% (**) and 90% (*).

The new insight of this paper has been discussed. Underlying the Tri-Partite model in this study, it was found that source credibility consists of two dimensions (trustworthiness and expertisness) are predictor to pro-environment intention that imply positive relationship. Therefore, the results from the analysis are consistent with the objective of the study. This result supported Till and Busler (2000)'s study, trustworthiness and expertise have positive on the attitude and intention. However, there was contradicting finding reported against in Lim et al., (2018), that source credibility (trustworthiness and expertise) of social media influencer found to be not significant towards the attitude and intention. Nevertheless, it is too early to generalize because this finding is based on pilot study. Therefore, further research is required to be conducted.

Limitation and recommendation for future research

This research still needs a room for improvement. This study can be extended by incorporating the effective advertising as the mediating variable in relation between sources credibility and pro-environment. This relationship could be more effective by putting a good strategy on an effective advertising on any environment activities. Other than that, according to the normality test, Shapiro-Wilk (W) for both dimension, p -value is at the significant result where $p < .001^{***}$. Hence the closer W to one, the more normal the sample is. This indicates the data set is not normal. Therefore, this will suggest for the further research to test data using the Smart PLS with broaden sample population to enhance and advance the generalization of the outcome. Smart PLS is better suited for proposition development by exploring the relationship between variables (Urbach & Alhemann, 2010). In addition, PLS is the most prominent method attributed to non-normal data and small sample size, (Hair et al., 2014).

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