

Social Media Based Fashion Opinion Leadership and Consumer Decision Making

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ABSTRACT

Fashion marketers have yet to comprehend the use of online influencers to utilize the influencers' opinion leadership. This research investigates the relationships between Indonesian fashion online opinion leadership on Instagram and consumers' behavioral intentions, i.e. intention to adopt new fashion and purchase intention. This research employs a quantitative survey with 219 sample of Indonesian respondents who follow either influencers of traditional celebrities or the non-traditional celebrities. The unit of analysis consists of two Instagram communities, one includes the followers of the traditional celebrities and the other one includes the followers of the non-traditional celebrities. Results show that online opinion leadership has positive relationships with consumer's behavioral intentions. However, there is no significant effect of perceived fit of personal interest on the relationships between them. In addition, findings show that there are no significant differences in the resulting behavioral intentions between the followers of traditional celebrities and non-traditional celebrities. This research provides scholars and practitioners further knowledge on the use of opinion leadership from different types of online influencers on social media. This research also pioneers the studies on fashion online opinion leadership on Instagram and its effect on consumer decision making process within the Indonesian fashion market.

Keywords

Instagram, intention to adopt new fashion, online opinion leadership, purchase intention, social media influencer, social media marketing.

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Introduction

In the last decade, Internet and social media has taken important roles in assisting people to connect in real time, to gather information, as well as to shop and purchase for their needs (Seo & Park, 2018). Compared to traditional media such as TV, magazine, or radio, the Internet and social media have been main information sources for consumers in their purchase decision journeys. Marketing with social media may attract 55% more consumers influence and 90% more sales, as compared to traditional marketing through the conventional media; as such they have considered as effective tools for strategic marketing and has attracted marketers (Seo & Park, 2018; Ural & Yuksel, 2015).

Consumer decision making journey has been an integral part of the practice and theory of marketing. Marketing strategies aim to influence the consumers' decisions. With the growing use of Internet and social media as part of marketing channels, social media have been used for commerce activities leading to social commerce (Gibreel et al., 2018). With the growing online selling activities through social commerce, an increasing number of online influencers have been grooming and becoming online opinion leaders that acting as sources of recommendation for other consumers. Their opinion leaderships are related with the degree on how they are considered as role models for others, a degree that shows how far the information provided by them are

considered attractive and persuading to others (Casaló et al., 2018). Nevertheless, despite the increasing interest in online opinion leadership use for industries, practitioner guidance and literature still lack studies in relation to the impact of these opinion leadership in consumer decision making (Amornpashara et al., 2015; Istania et al., 2019).

Internet penetration worldwide has been growing tremendously that impacting social media adoption, and Indonesia as one emerging market is not an exception. Businesses and consumers in Indonesia have embraced social media quickly nowadays (Ananda et al., 2019). One of the most widely used social media platform in Indonesia is Instagram with 45 million of Indonesian netizens use the photo sharing application (Istania et al., 2019). Indonesia has become a prominent growing online market in Asia. However, in general, Indonesia is still neglected in literature of social media marketing and online opinion leaders including in fashion industry –an important industry contributing to Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP) and one of the products mostly bought online in Indonesia (Ananda et al., 2019).

Considering the gaps in practice and academics as described above, this research aims to investigate how online opinion leaderships brought by the Indonesian fashion influencers on Instagram may affect consumers' decision making such as the intention to purchase fashion products and the intention to adopt new fashion. This paper is expected to assist

fashion managers in utilizing the fashion opinion leaders to influence consumer behavior in decision making.

Literature Review And Theoretical Background

Online Opinion Leadership on Social Media

Opinion leaders are people that are able to have influences over a specific group of people and are easier to be accepted by the public due to their positive image, thus embodying the image of a role model (Casaló et al., 2018). Opinion leaders could either be people with an extensive knowledge of a particular topic –experts– or who have many connections with others (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Opinion leaders traditionally have been found in offline channels. However, recently, they can be found in online channels. An offline opinion leader could be regarded as someone who has a higher social status, a successful person, and is usually able to influence others online (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). An offline opinion leader could be regarded as someone who has a higher social status, a successful person, and is usually able to influence others online; examples are public figures (Wang et al., 2017).

As social media marketing becoming ubiquitous, consumers have started to trust not only regular or traditional celebrities as brand ambassadors, but also regular people they see on social media (The Jakarta Post, 2019). Fashion opinion leaders have been regarded as keys to the diffusion of new fashion trends, as they have great influence on their followers because of their knowledge, expertise and are considered reliable sources of information (Casaló et al., 2018; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Fashion Influencers and Online Opinion Leadership

Instagram is an online photo –and recently video– sharing application social media platform which was launched in October 2010. Instagram itself allows its users to follow other users. In the context of marketing, it enables consumers to get the latest trend, the updates, and fulfils the interests of the consumers on a specific product or brand. Instagram has been one of top social media platforms used by businesses and consumers in Indonesia. There is a plenty of fashion brands in Indonesia uses Instagram to drive awareness and even selling directly through Instagram (Ananda et al., 2019).

In fashion industry, Instagram has been increasingly popular as a marketing platform. Many small and large fashion brands established their social media accounts to gather followers through Instagram, thus allowing brands to develop their embedded online brand communities on social media. Further, the utilization of influencers as online opinion leaders on social media has been part of marketing strategies conducted by global and local fashion brands (Ananda et al., 2017). The fashion influencers can be from regular public figures such as the celebrities, or the regular people growing into online influencers (Duboff, 2017).

Fashion Opinion Leadership on Instagram and Consumer's Behavioral Intention

Even with abundant information from promotional activities by marketers and brands, consumers still decide their purchase decisions based on the review of individuals who are perceived by the consumers as knowledgeable about the products they want to buy (Kwon & Song, 2014). This has a tendency to lead consumers to look for particular persons, opinion leaders, who have expertise in the products or brands of their interests.

A study by Casaló et al. (2018) finds out that an influencer's fashion opinion leadership on Instagram may affect consumer behavioral intentions, namely intentions to interact with the influencer, recommend the influencer's account, and follow fashion advices from the influencer. Further, Istania et al. (2019) extends the study and finds out that opinion leadership of Instagram influencers of cosmetics and beauty products also tend to affect consumers' behavioral intention. Nevertheless, the studies related to the effect of online opinion leadership on Instagram on consumer purchase decision is scarce and even of non-existence, particularly in relation to fashion consumption. Thus, this research establishes hypotheses to fulfil its research objectives, i.e. to study the relationships between opinion leaderships brought by the fashion influencers on Instagram and consumers' purchase intention as well as adopting new fashion intention, through the case of Indonesian Instagram fashion consumers.

Hypotheses Development

An individual can have a higher self-esteem if he or she is using a product that is recommended by an opinion leader because he or she can be more confident with the decision through the opinion leader's recommendation compared to their own decision (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Besides, aspirational groups on Instagram –such as celebrities, renowned persons, and famous persons– can significantly affect purchase intention (Amornpashara et al., 2015). Thus, we posit that:

H1: Perceived opinion leadership has a positive relationship with purchase intention.

Fashion consumers need to be updated about the new fashion innovations proposed in the fashion industry where new styles are often offered by fashion brands cyclically and rapidly (Rahman, 2014). Whereas, a fashion opinion leader can have a positive influence in an individual's intention to adopt a new product (Lang & Armstrong, 2018). Hence, we establish this hypothesis:

H2: Perceived opinion leadership has a positive relationship with intention to adopt new fashion.

Further, scholars find that the higher the congruence between the content of a social media account and the consumers personal interests, the greater is the emotional closeness between the opinion leader and the consumer. As such, if the content posted by an opinion leader on Instagram are congruent with the consumer's personality, he or she will tend to follow to a greater extent the suggestions of the opinion leader (Casaló et al., 2018). Hence, we posit that:

H3a: Perceived fit of personal interests with the opinion leader's Instagram profile strengthens the relationship between opinion leadership and purchase intention.

H3b: Perceived fit of personal interests with the opinion leader's Instagram profile strengthens the relationship

between opinion leadership and intention to adopt new fashion.

The proposed research model is summarized by Figure 1.

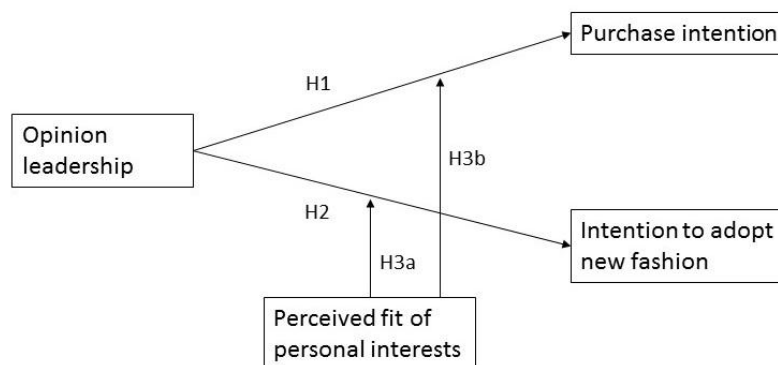


Figure 1: Research model

Research Design

Sampling and Data Collection

Data collection for this research uses convenience sampling method. The approach of this research is quantitative with online survey method. Research subjects are followers or members of local Indonesian fashion influencers' Instagram accounts. The fashion influencers were identified through the media news, reports, and a screening survey. The initial sample covered 221 respondents who were member of Indonesian influencers' Instagram accounts. But, after data cleanup, the sample data consisted of 219 respondents: 86 followers of traditional fashion celebrities (e.g. artists or general public figures) and 133 followers of non-traditional fashion celebrities (e.g. micro-influencers of Instagram or the celebgrams, Istania et al., 2019). The sample consists of 53 men and 166 women. All respondents reside in Indonesian cities.

Measurement Tools and Data Analysis

The questionnaire consists of sixteen questions related with the indicators of the latent variables of the research model measured with 7-scale points Likert-type ("1" = "very disagree" up to "7" = "very agree"). Measurement items were adapted from previous literature regarding online opinion leadership and fashion consumption (Amornpashara et al., 2015; Casaló et al., 2018; and Rahman, 2014).

Data analysis utilizes SmartPLS version 3.0. The data analysis uses the variance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) of Partial Least Square (PLS) with a main consideration that this study is basically an exploratory study in which there has been a lack of established theories in relation to the social media opinion leadership studies, especially in the relationship between opinion leadership and purchase behavior. The use of PLS-SEM is recommended when the research is exploratory or an extension of an existing structural theory; or when the goal is predicting key target constructs (Braojos-Gomez et al.,

2015). Thus, the analysis takes into account the predictive capabilities of PLS-SEM to achieve the research goal in

predicting the consumers' behavioral intentions resulting from the online fashion leadership on Instagram, i.e. purchase intention and intention to adopt new fashion, which is currently a scarcity in social media marketing field of study.

Results

Findings

Prior to conducting the measurement and structural model evaluation of the proposed research model, indicators of constructs with factor loading lower than suggested value of 0.7 were ousted (Hair et al., 2017). Thereby resulting one indicator of purchase intention has to be diminished from the model. Then, a MICOM procedure was established to check whether the multi-group analysis (MGA) was feasible in analyzing the two groups of different members of influencers as suggested by Henseler et al. (2016). The compositional invariance was established; Thus, we conducted the multi-group analysis in SmartPLS to investigate the path differences between the Instagram followers of the traditional fashion celebrities and the Instagram followers of the non-traditional fashion celebrities.

Constructs' internal reliabilities are examined by looking at the factor loadings of all the indicators to see if they fulfill the 0.7 benchmark as suggested by (Hair et al., 2017). After dismissal of one indicator with lower than 0.7 factor loading, the construct validity was established. Discriminant validity analysis through the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio calculation suggests lower than the maximum benchmark value 0.9 (Ab Hamid et al., 2017), thus the discriminant validity of the model is established. This is indicated as well by the Fornell-Larcker criterion analysis whereby the square root of each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) shows a greater value than the correlations with other latent constructs ratio (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). All AVE scores of the constructs are above 0.5

suggesting that convergent validity has been met (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). For internal consistency, values of composite reliability and Cronbach-alpha between 0.60 to 0.70 are acceptable in an exploratory research (Ab Hamid et al.,

2017). Meanwhile, the model shows composite reliabilities and Cronbach-alphas of the constructs are above 0.8 indicating internal reliability of the models as summarized by Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability and validity measurements of the model

Construct	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Opinion leadership	0.839	0.881	0.552
Purchase intention	0.925	0.952	0.869
Intention to adopt new fashion	0.916	0.947	0.856
Perceived fit of personal interests	0.884	0.928	0.812

Table 2: Reliability and validity measurements of the model

Path	Coefficient	p-values	Sig. (at p<0.05)	Hypothesis
Opinion leadership -> Purchase intention	0.231	0.000	Significant	H1 accepted
Opinion leadership -> Intention to adopt new fashion	0.190	0.001	Significant	H2 accepted
Moderating of perceived fit or personal interests (Opinion leadership -> Purchase intention)	-0.121	0.424	Not significant	H3a not accepted
Moderating of perceived fit of personal interests (Opinion leadership -> Intention to adopt new fashion)	0.095	0.528	Not significant	H3b not accepted

Table 2 summarizes the structural model evaluation results. For the structural model evaluation to test the hypotheses, a PLS algorithm and bootstrapping calculation with 5000 samples are used. The path coefficients suggest that H1 and H2 are accepted, thus fashion opinion leadership on Instagram tend to affect positively consumers' purchase intention and intention to adopt new fashion. However, the moderating effects are rejected (H3a and H3b) because the strengthening effects of consumers' perceived fit of personal interests with the influencer towards the influencers' perceived opinion leaderships are not evitable.

The MGA calculation finds that fashion influencers' opinion leadership tends to affect positively the purchase intention and intention to adopt new fashion for both of Instagram members of traditional celebrity and non-traditional celebrities. And it shows that there are no significant differences on the relationships between opinion leadership and purchase intention as well as intention to adopt new fashion in those two groups of Instagram followers of the traditional celebrities and the non-traditional celebrities.

Discussion

The findings imply that the more an online influencer on Instagram is perceived as an opinion leader in fashion themes, the more their social media community members will follow the recommendations, advices, and suggestions about fashion from the influencer. The members, i.e. the fashion consumers, will tend to adopt new fashion styles and purchase fashion items suggested by the opinion leader. Hence, the results confirm that either common celebrities from public figures or influencers from the non-traditional

celebrities (e.g. celebgrams or vloggers) should be taken into account in the fashion industry as many fashion consumers follow them and tend to imitate their sense and follow the suggestion of these opinion leaders that may affect positively their fashion purchase decisions.

The finding that the effect of consumers' perception of the influencers' opinion leadership towards their adoption and purchase intention does not affected by their perceived fit of personal interests with the opinion leader's Instagram account suggests the importance of the Instagram content published by the influencers. An Instagram fashion influencer needs to post original, unique and creative content to be a trusted online opinion leader whose fashion advices can enhance consumers' knowledge and intention to follow the purchase recommendations (Casaló et al., 2018; Istania et al., 2019). It is also important to boost the image of authenticity and credibility of the fashion influencers to be considered as opinion leaders (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This is crucial for fashion industry, since fashion always introduces new styles (Ananda et al., 2017, 2019; Rahman, 2014). Moreover, Instagram as a photo and video sharing application has played a crucial role in fashion industry context (Amornpashara et al., 2015; Casaló et al., 2018).

Conclusion And Implications

This research findings suggest evidence on how online opinion leaderships brought by the Indonesian fashion influencers on Instagram may affect fashion consumers' decision making in terms of consumers' intention to purchase fashion products and intention to adopt new fashion suggested by the fashion influencers. The study is a

part of efforts to minimize the gaps between insufficient knowledge among managers in fashion industry as well as academicians about how to enhance online opinion leadership from influencers on social media and how to maximize it to influence consumer behavioral intention taking into account the difference types of the online fashion influencers.

With regards to the research objectives, the findings generally suggest some similarities between the behavioral intention of consumers from social media community made up of followers of the traditional celebrity influencers and the non-traditional celebrity influencers resulting from the influencers' opinion leadership. In terms of the consequences in consumers' purchase behavior, the perception of the influencers' opinion leaderships on Instagram has a tendency to affect positively consumers' intention to purchase fashion products and to adopt new fashion styles as suggested by the fashion influencers. This is happened both in the consumers of followers of traditional Instagram celebrities and followers of the non-traditional Instagram celebrities. Hence, this research extends and suggests some consistencies with the current literature (e.g. Amornpashara et al., 2015; Casaló et al., 2018; and Rahman, 2014).

This research contributes to the theory development in the social media opinion leadership body of knowledge in at least three areas. First, this research extends the current study concerning online opinion leaderships brought by social media in Indonesian society whose community is one of the largest social media population in the world. Second, this research further provides empirical evidences on the consequences of the opinion leadership on Instagram towards consumer purchase decision process in fashion industry which has been actively conducting online influencer marketing. Third, this research provides further evidences on the consequences of online opinion leaderships brought by the traditional and non-traditional celebrities as influencers on social media in the fashion industry. The finding that the effect of consumers' perception of the influencers' opinion leadership towards their adoption and purchase intention does not affected by their perceived fit with personal interests imply the importance of the Instagram content published by the influencers. An Instagram fashion influencer needs to post original, unique and creative content to be a trusted online opinion leader whose fashion advices can enhance consumers' knowledge and intention to follow the purchase recommendations (Casaló et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2018).

This research is expected to provide further knowledge to fashion managers in utilizing the fashion opinion leaders to influence consumer behavior in their process of decision making. It implies that fashion brands and marketers should collaborate with the online social media fashion influencers –both from the traditional influencers such as celebrities and public figures, and the non-traditional ones from the common people that grow into influencers. This may be helpful for the fashion brands and marketers to create compelling and informational Instagram content should they intend to positively influence fashion consumers' purchase behavioral intention, namely purchase intention and intention to adopt new fashion.

Despite its contributions, this research has some limitations that highlight some guidance on future research avenues. First, the study does not differentiate female influencers and male influencers; while it will be interesting to explore the difference that might be brought by different genders from the influencers on the creation of their opinion leadership that might influence consumer behavior. Second, there are many international fashion brands operating in Indonesia that have started utilizing global social media influencers (Hypeauditor, 2019). These global fashion influencers can be a topic for further studies, as this research context is only on local Indonesian influencers.

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