

FASHION BLOGGERS: FORMING CONSUMER ATTITUDES TO DETERMINE INTENTION TO BUY AND E-WOM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out what influences the formation of consumer attitudes towards bloggers. The method in this research was qualitative. The researcher utilized the Convenience Sampling method to gather information from readers. The data obtained was analyzed using the Smart PLS 4.0 software. The results of the research show, to be able to have a big influence on its readers, a blog must first make its readers have a positive attitude. The attitude of readers towards bloggers can be formed from the credibility and homophily of the blog in the eyes of the readers. Then, the blog will get a positive attitude and bloggers can easily influence the purchase intention and e-WOM of its readers.

KEYWORDS - Fashion, blog, intention to buy, e-WOM.

1. INTRODUCTION

Customers' routines and lifestyles have changed as a result of digital technology, which ultimately results in changes in consumer behavior. The rampant use of the internet has increased consumer participation in the digital sphere, which then triggers major changes in consumption behavior (Ipek, 2020). As of January 2022, there were 204.7 million internet users in Indonesia according to reports. This is due to a combination of technology's quick development, the availability of digital infrastructure, and the development of digital services. The fact that 73.7 percent of the population has access to the internet also supports this statistic. This condition encourages the development of the digital world as a place where people may be active and creative (Elfira & Julianto, 2022). This means that Indonesia is a big market for the digital market.

One of the platforms in the digital sphere is a blog. According to Dachli (2022), a blog is an online page created to accommodate a collection of online content that can be accessed by other people. Even though it varies, in general, the content contained in blogs is in the form of writing. The writing can be stories, opinions, information, and other works. In the current digital era, internet users already have a high level of confidence and recognition for blog or blogger authors, transforming them from simple amateur writers to influential figures. Bloggers have evolved into social influencers, promoting thought-provoking viewpoints to their followers and enticing readers to participate in discussion through comments and (Quelhas-Brito et al., 2020). In other words, blogs have an influence that cannot be underestimated in digital marketing. This statement is supported by data reported by Force Manager (2022), that 84% of online consumers have purchased a product based on the explanation they read on the blog, 25% of people aged between 25 and 34 years read blogs every day, two out of three people read blogs at least once a week, and one in four people buy something every month thanks to blogs.

The impact of blogs which are so influential on digital marketing is also unavoidable in the sector studied in this research, the fashion sector. The fashion sector, including luxury brands and stores, contributes significantly to the world economy each year. It is one of the biggest but most difficult industries since it is affected by so many different things, such as the uncertain economy and the digital transformation (McKinsey & Company, 2022). In Indonesia itself, the fashion industry is very broad and has very dynamic trends. This industry has made a major contribution to the creative economy sector, it controls 17% of the creative economy in Indonesia (Rosana, 2022). Many fashion brands are under pressure to innovate in response to the digital era, while also being conscious of the financial commitment required for their digitalization. These companies started to accelerate their speed to market, innovate, and automate the essential functions of their manufacturing, supply chain processes, and product design (Swifterm, 2022). Seeing how blogs can have a big impact on the world of digital

marketing, it is interesting to examine how bloggers in the fashion industry can have an impact on the sustainability of the industry, and what influences it. This can be said to be important, considering the potential that can be generated from the fashion industry in the digital market can greatly impact even a country's economy.

Blogs or bloggers in the world of fashion have been studied several times. One of them is by Zafar & Sarwar (2021) conducted a case study in Pakistan to analyze how fashion blogs affect the purchasing habits of millennial consumers. According to the research results, millennials' purchase intention is significantly affected by their attitudes towards fashion blogs, as well as their perceptions of the ease of use, social influence, and the credibility of the influencers featured on the blogs. Meanwhile, studies on what influences the level of participation or involvement of blog readers have been researched by Mainolfi & Vergura (2022), who found that perceived similarities with other blog readers (homophily) and the credibility of fashion bloggers have a positive effect on engagement in blogs. Additionally, homophily and higher blog engagement suggested that readers were more likely to make purchases of the things the blogger was promoting and had a propensity to disseminate good e-WOM (electronic word of mouth) regarding the fashion blogger. So according to this study, the engagement variable has proven to be very effective in increasing purchase intention and e-WOM. In previous research, there has been no research that examines the relationship between the variable "attitude towards bloggers" on purchase intentions and e-WOM among readers. Mainolfi & Vergura's research does trace purchase intention and e-WOM, but uses variable "engagement". Researcher thinks that, which will be presented later in the hypothesis, the variable "attitude towards bloggers" can also affect purchase intentions and e-WOM.

Research that examines the variable "attitude towards bloggers" has been carried out before, such as by Magano et al. (2022) who found that attitude towards influencers determines purchase intentions from followers. However, this research is limited to only proving the effect of attitudes toward influencers (one of which is bloggers) on purchase intention. Not much different, Chetioui et al. (2020) found that attitudes towards influencers have an impact on brand attitudes and consumer purchase intentions. Likewise with Santiago et al. (2020).

Because there is no research that wants to prove that attitudes towards influencers, or in this study, the bloggers, can have an impact besides on intention to buy, but also on e-WOM, the researcher here wants to add novelty by proving how "attitudes towards bloggers" not only affect intention to buy, but also e-WOM.

Based on the above considerations, this study seeks to advance our understanding of how the attitudes toward bloggers affect the market., especially the digital market. In more detail, this study tries to find the forming factors of readers' attitudes towards bloggers, and the actions taken by readers after determining attitudes towards those bloggers. Which in this study, is hypothesized to have an impact on purchase intention and e-WOM/Electronic Word of Mouth. The market that will be researched is the Indonesian market, which is a developed market. The results of this research can be useful for influencers, especially those in the blogging field, to determine the best strategy for building their blog so that it gets a lot of readers, and then it can help to successfully sell brands in Indonesia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Perceived Credibility of Blog Readers

Reinikainen et al. (2020) stated that the level of credibility perceived by consumers is a highly significant factor. Reinikainen et al. (2020) have also demonstrated that perceived credibility of the influencer is a crucial and foreseeable element in influencer marketing. The attitudes and purchasing behavior of social media consumers can be influenced by the perceived credibility of an influencer (Silva et al., 2020). Young consumers tend to try to find new and fresh fashion, which in turn considers what blogs convey as the most influential and credible (Schouten et al., 2020; Shan et al., 2020). Consumers are more likely to accept statements about a product if they are delivered by bloggers with frequency and credibility as an influencer, and this positively influences attitudes towards the influencer (Bevan-Dye, 2020).

The Role of Perceived Homophily of Blog Readers

The popularity of social media in the setting of social contacts, such as e-commerce, blogging, and social service, has boosted interest in the study of homophily in the marketing literature. It has been demonstrated that homophily or perceived similarity affects community engagement and improves the quality of information (Ladhari et al., 2020). In general, social media users perceive the influencers they follow as relatable and attractive (Ki et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers

In the context of fashion blogs, the study of attitudes holds great significance in social media marketing and online advertising, especially when it comes to purchase intention among young consumers. (Casaló et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). Consumers often seek out information from other individuals who possess it, particularly in situations where uncertainty is present (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022), so that the way they perceive other people becomes an important thing that will influence their buying decision process. In this sense, the visual branding of influencers has a direct positive influence on the perception of potential consumers, because it will affect the chances of purchase intention (Argyris et al., 2021), which is the main goal of brands when carrying out campaigns using influencers, or in this study, is bloggers.

Research that discusses “attitudes towards bloggers” can influence e-WOM and consumer purchase intentions has never been done before. Mainolfi & Vergura (2022) found that blog engagement has an effect on consumer purchase intentions and e-WOM. However, the blog engagement variable means only paying attention to the statistics on the blog. The researcher in this article assumes that what influences e-WOM is also "attitude towards bloggers". In turn, a positive attitude toward the blogger will lead to higher levels of intention to buy the product recommended by the fashion blogger (either through sponsored content or organic content), as well as higher propensities to share blog content and consider leaving positive comments about the blogger.

Based on the background back on top, got pulled the hypothesis as follows:

H¹: Readers' perceived credibility influences attitudes toward bloggers.

H²: The perceived homophily of readers influences attitudes towards bloggers.

H^{3a}: Attitudes towards bloggers influence purchase intentions.

H^{3b}: Attitudes towards bloggers influence e-WOM.

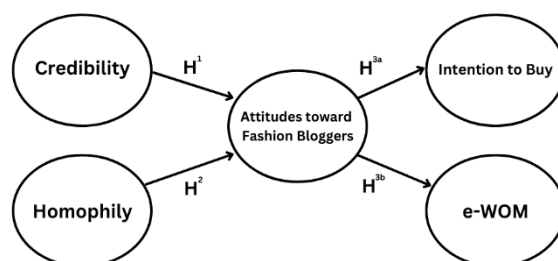


Figure 1. The conceptual research framework

3. METHODOLOGY

The researchers collected quantitative data from readers of fashion blogs, utilizing a validated scale that was adapted to measure a variety of constructs. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method that has been employed to gather data from readers of fashion blogs. A 5-point Likert Scale was utilized to evaluate respondents' answers, where the scale ranged from '5' representing 'Strongly Agree' to '1' indicating 'Strongly Disagree'. The variables used are measured using a previously validated scale. A four-item scale developed by Serman (2022) was used to evaluate the credibility of bloggers, which had been modified for fashion blogs.

In addition, the four items created by Ertug et al. (2022) was used to measure the concept of homophily. Attitudes towards influencers by Chetioui et al. (2020) adapted for fashion blogs. The measurement of purchase intention is conducted using the five elements suggested by Wijekoon & Sabri (2021). The evaluation of e-WOM was carried out by utilizing the three-item measurement scale developed by Rana & Arora (2022) which was adapted to suit the objectives of the research. The Smart PLS 4.0 program was used to analyze the data.

4. RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

The results of the questionnaires that the researchers collected were checked for verification in advance, whether they met the desired criteria. If not, then the respondent was not included in this study. After checking, a total of 210 respondents were obtained in this study. The subsequent section presents a descriptive analysis that outlines the characteristics of the participants who took part in this study.

Table 1 Respondent Profile

Profile	Respondent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Man	74	41,6
	Woman	104	58,4
Last education	High School	41	19,5
	Diploma (D3)	23	11
	Bachelor degree (S1)	114	54,3
	Postgraduate (S2)	32	15,2
Domicile	Java and Bali Islands	140	66,7
	Sumatera Island	32	15,2
	Kalimantan Island	18	8,6
	Sulawesi Island	9	4,3
	Eastern Indonesia (NTB, NTT, Maluku, Papua)	11	5,2
Age	< 25 years old	73	34,8
	26-35 years old	97	46,2
	36-45 years old	29	13,8
	> 45 years old	11	5,2
How Long Have Been a Reader of Indonesian Fashion Blogger	< 1 years	66	31,4
	1 – 2 years	36	17,1
	2 – 3 years	41	19,5
	> 3 years	67	31,9
Followers of Indonesian Fashion Blogger	Yes	138	65,7
	No	32	15,2
	Sometimes	40	19
Interest in Fashion	Yes	124	59
	No	24	11,4
	Sometimes	62	29,5
Hang out with Fashion Enthusiasts	Yes	115	54,8
	No	25	11,9
	Sometimes	70	33,3

Outer Model

Table 2 Outer Model

Variable/Indicator	Loading Factor	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Credibility of Indonesian Fashion Bloggers		0,694	0,852	Reliable
In my opinion, Indonesian fashion bloggers have good knowledge about fashion. (KR1)	0,817			Valid
Fashion bloggers have a genuine interest in fashion. (KR2)	0,860			Valid
The average fashion blog in Indonesia respects critics/evaluation from readers. (KR3)	0,859			Valid
What Indonesian fashion	0,793			Valid

bloggers write can be trusted. (KR4)				
Homophily		0,800	0,917	Reliable
It seems that other readers of the Indonesian fashion blog that I read have the same interest as me. (HM1)	0,817			Valid
The contents of the Indonesian fashion blog that I read, the ideas/opinions conveyed by the blogger are the same as mine. (HM2)	0,922			Valid
On the fashion blogs that I often read, I and other readers share the same fashion sense. (HM3)	0,899			Valid
My "likes" and "dislikes" tastes are the same as the other readers of the fashion blog. (HM4)	0,885			Valid
Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers		0,765	0,897	Reliable
I follow various media owned by fashion bloggers that I often read. (SK1)	0,862			Valid
I tend to buy products advertised by fashion bloggers that I follow/read a lot. (SK2)	0,903			Valid
I usually recommend products and/or services advertised by fashion bloggers that I follow/read frequently. (SK3)	0,876			Valid
In the future, I will buy fashion items advertised by fashion bloggers. (SK4)	0,857			Valid
Intention to Buy		0,684	0,884	Reliable
In the future, I will consume products suggested by fashion bloggers. (NB1)	0,869			Valid
I tend to buy one or more products if I consult them on the fashion blog first. (NB2)	0,854			Valid
In the future, when shopping for fashion, I will rely on	0,830			Valid

information/suggestions from fashion bloggers. (NB3)				
I buy fashion products that I see on blogs through e-commerce (Shopee, Tokopedia, Amazon, dll). (NB4)	0,779			Valid
Buying fashion items online on blogs is the recommended way to do. (NB5)	0,800			Valid
e-WOM		0,822	0,917	Reliable
I like to make positive comments about fashion blog that I read to my friends on my social media accounts. (EW1)	0,899			Valid
I like to share the review content on fashion blogs to my friends about the products I like. (EW2)	0,923			Valid
I like to upload the contents from my favorite fashion blog to my personal social media. (EW3)	0,897			Valid

Outer Model or Outer Measurements are often referred to as Measurement Models. This test aims to specify the relationship between latent variables and their indicators. In the Outer Model, there is Loading factor, which aims to measure how much correlation between indicators and latent constructs. To pass the test, it is necessary for the indicator to exhibit a loading factor value exceeding 0.7. As displayed in Table 2, the loading factor results from this study demonstrate that all indicators have a value > 0.7, indicating that all indicators have successfully passed the loading factor test.

Then there is also the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which is a measure of discriminant validity that uses the output of the average value. The condition for the variable to fulfill the AVE test is that the AVE value must be greater than 0.5. Table 2 displays that the AVE test results of this research reveal an AVE value exceeding 0.5 for all construct variables. Therefore, it can be inferred that all variables in this study possess satisfactory convergent validity.

In addition, there is also a Cronbach's Alpha test which is a reliability test to see whether the construct variable is reliable or not. A construct variable is said to be reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.7. In Table 2, it was found that all variables obtained values > 0.7, so that it can be said that all construct variables in this study were reliable.

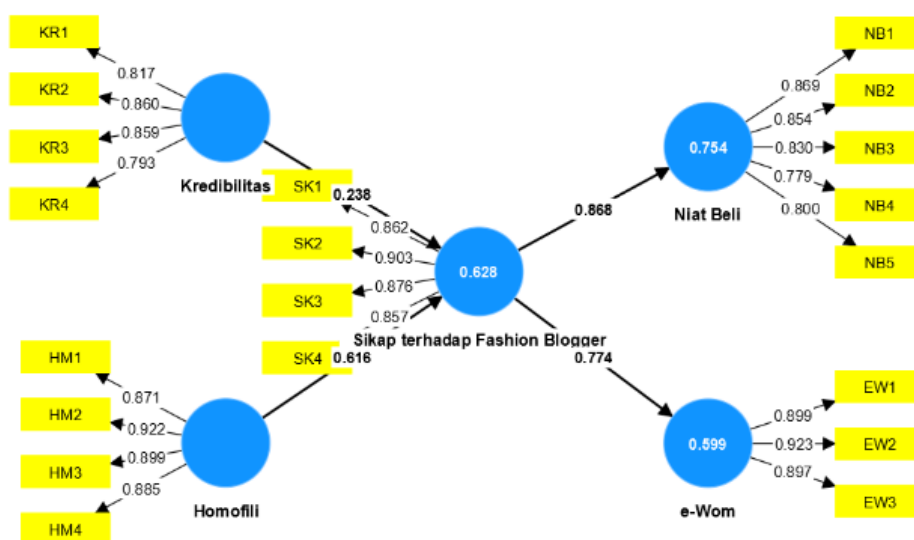


Figure 2. Visual Explanation of Variable Testing in Smart PLS 4.0

Inner Model

The Inner Model is a structural model utilized to forecast causal relationships between variables that are not directly measurable, such as latent variables. This model explains the causal relationship between latent variables based on the fundamental principles of the theory. To examine the relationship between latent constructs, tests were conducted on the structural model. Various tests can be used to assess the structural model, one of which is R square. R square value is used to determine the extent to which exogenous variables explain the endogenous variables. The R square value ranges from 0 to 1, the closer to 1 it means the better the exogenous variables explain the endogenous variables.

Table 3 R Square Value in This Study

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers	0,628	0,624
Intention to Buy	0,754	0,752
e-WOM	0,599	0,597

Based on the R square results table above, a score of 0.628 is obtained for the variable Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers. This means that the Credibility and Homophily variables explain the variable Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers by 62.8%, while 37.2% cannot explain the Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers variable.

Meanwhile, the variable Intention to Buy scores 0.628. This means that the variable Attitude towards Fashion Bloggers explains the Intention to Buy by 75.4%, while 24.6% cannot explain the Intention to Buy. The Attitude towards Fashion Bloggers variable can also explain the e-WOM variable by 59.9%, while the remaining 40.1% cannot explain it.

In addition, the Inner Model also contains Value Path Coefficients which aim to measure whether exogenous variables have an influence on endogenous variables. The impact of exogenous variables on endogenous variables can be ascertained by checking whether the T Statistics value exceeds 1.96 or by examining the P Values, which should be less than 0.05. We can also find out the direction of the relationship by looking at the value in the Original Sample. If it is positive or it is greater than 0, it means it has a positive relationship direction and if it is negative or lower than 0 it means it has a negative relationship direction.

Table 4 Path Coefficients

Associated Variables	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P Values	Result
Credibility -> Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers	0.238	3.634	0.000	Accepted
Homophily -> Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers	0.616	9.649	0.000	Accepted
Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers -> Intention to Buy	0.868	49.477	0.000	Accepted
Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers -> e-WOM	0.774	25.675	0.000	Accepted

The initial factor, Credibility, has a favorable effect on Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers, as evidenced by a positive relationship and a T Statistics value of 3.634 > 1.96 or a P Value of 0.000 < 0.05. As a result, the first hypothesis of this research, which posits that credibility has a positive impact on attitudes towards fashion bloggers, can be accepted.

The next factor, Homophily, has a positive relationship with Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers, as indicated by a T Statistics value of 9.649 > 1.96 or a P Value of 0.000 < 0.05. As a result, the second hypothesis of this study, which suggests that homophily has a beneficial influence on attitudes towards fashion bloggers, can be confirmed.

The third factor, Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers, has a significant positive relationship with the Intention to Buy of readers, as evidenced by a T Statistics value of 49.477 > 1.96 or P Values of 0.000 < 0.05. As a result, Hypothesis 3a of this research, which suggests that Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers have an impact on the Intention to Buy of readers, can be validated.

The fourth factor, Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers, has a positive relationship with e-WOM from readers, with a T Statistics value of 25.675 > 1.96 and a P Value of 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the 3b hypothesis of this research, which proposes that Attitudes towards Fashion Bloggers have an impact on readers' e-WOM, can be confirmed.

Discussion

After testing the hypotheses in this study, it was found that each of the research hypotheses was accepted or proved to be true. Credibility and homophily in fashion blogs are proven to have an influence on the attitude of readers towards bloggers. The higher the credibility and similarity of the audience or readers (homophily) in a blog, the more positive the attitude of the readers towards the blogger. Therefore, bloggers are expected to increase credibility and topic similarity to what readers want on their blogs. This will have a positive impact later on bloggers. These results again prove the findings of Reinikainen et al. (2020); Silva et al. (2020); Schouten et al. (2020); Shan et al. (2020); Bevan-Dye (2020); Ladhari et al. (2020); and Sokolova & Kefi, (2020).

Furthermore, this study also proves that readers' attitudes towards bloggers can also influence readers' Intention to Buy. Meaning, that if attitudes towards bloggers continue to increase or become positive, it will affect the reader's desire to buy the product/service promoted by the blogger. So to be able to make readers easily persuaded, bloggers must make readers have a positive attitude towards them first. The method, as previously stated, is to increase credibility and produce blogs that are homophilous with their readers. If they have a positive attitude, it will be easier to influence readers, especially influencing their intention to buy. This is in line with the finding of Casaló et al. (2020); Sokolova & Kefi (2020); Trivedi & Sama (2020); Ibáñez-Sánchez et al. (2022); and Argyris et al. (2021).

In addition, which is a new finding in this research, if readers have a positive attitude towards bloggers, not only can bloggers influence their readers' purchase intentions, but can also influence the e-WOM that readers will produce. So to enhance the image of the blog that readers will spread on the Internet after reading a blog, bloggers must get a positive attitude from readers first.

5. CONCLUSION

Blogs are one of the most effective tools for influencing people in digital marketing. Therefore, blogs have great potential in a country's economy. Today's bloggers have a role that cannot be underestimated in society's economic. To be able to have a big impact on its readers, a blog needs a formula that if used will improve their quality which can be assessed through purchase intention and e-WOM from readers after reading the blog. The findings in this study offer this formula. If bloggers want to influence their readers' intention to buy and e-WOM, what needs to be done is to get a positive attitude from those readers first. Meanwhile, attitudes of readers towards blogger can be formed from the credibility and homophily of the blog in the eyes of the readers. Therefore, the first thing bloggers have to do is create credible content that is in line with their target audience. After that, automatically, the blog will get a positive attitude and bloggers can easily influence the intention to buy and e-WOM from readers.

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