

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BODY IMAGE IDEALS AND FASHION
TRENDS AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUTH**

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APPROVAL FOR SUBMISSION

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Impact of social media on body image ideals and fashion trends among Malaysian youth,” prepared and submitted by Lim Ming Xian in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communications (HONS) Broadcasting is hereby accepted.

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Abstract

In today's digital age, social media has become an inseparable part of the lives of teenagers, significantly influencing their views on body image and fashion trends. This research delves into how much Malaysian teenagers rely on social media platforms to shape their body image ideals and fashion trends, their perspectives on the authenticity and reality of these portrayals, and the impact this has on their self-esteem and self-image. The study, through an extensive literature review, highlights the widespread influence of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, as well as the role of influencers in shaping behaviours and trends among teenagers. The study also addresses the issue of unrealistic beauty standards portrayed on social media and its potential impacts on body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of teenagers, this research aims to offer valuable insights to develop interventions and strategies that can promote healthier body image perceptions and counter the negative impacts of social media use among teenagers in Malaysia. The findings of this study contribute towards an enhanced understanding of the socio-cultural implications of social media on teenagers' well-being and provide actionable insights for parents, teenagers, and social media influencers to navigate the digital landscape more mindfully.

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Background of study

In this digital era, social media has become an essential part of everyone's life. The usage of social media has seen a significant rise in the past few years. Furthermore, Malaysians rely on social media for various purposes, ranging from exploring the latest fashion trends to staying updated on the news. According to the most recent survey, Malaysia recorded approximately 30.8 million social media users actively engaging online at least once a month in 2022 (OOSGA, 2023). Social media provides individuals with the ability to interact with one another by sharing and consuming information. Some popular examples of these web-based communication tools include Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Nations, 2021). It often includes features like likes, comments, shares, and direct messaging which can be used as a tool of interaction between users and followers.

Body image describes how a person perceives their bodies and how they feel about them, it includes skin, weight, hair, or the shape of their body (Brazier, 2023). Yvette Brazier (2023) also stated that the beauty of the human body has been highly regarded throughout history, popular culture, social media, and society and could be the reasons of influence how a person views his or her body. Nowadays, people often post and share their daily lives on social media. Although we know that life is not always good, people will only share their good side with the public to gain more attention. According to Rachel Ehmke (2023), when teenagers look at everyone online looking perfect, they can feel bad about themselves, and they often share pictures that make them look perfect on social media as a way to compensate. Consequently, if the image that they portray on social media does not match their actual identity in real life, they may feel even worse. Peer acceptance is a big thing for teenagers and many of them very care about their appearance. Who doesn't want to look cool if he or she can? Teenagers nowadays spend a lot of time on social media. According to a report from Meltwater and We Are Social (2023), Malaysians spend almost 2 hours and 47 minutes daily on social media. They will also put a lot of effort and spend hours editing their photos to make them "perfect" in order to gain more likes on social media (Rachel Ehmke, 2023). Rachel Ehmke (2023) also stated that teenagers will feel much more pressure when they are continually seeing those feeds on social media showing how great everyone is. In this case, a person who always feels dissatisfied with their body image and appearance will have a higher risk of getting depression (Brazier, 2023). However, research has shown that teenagers who reduced their

social media usage by 50% for just a few weeks perceived significant improvements in their appearance and self-esteem compared to those who used social media consistently (Sliwa, 2023).

Nowadays, people who use social media will follow at least one influencer. We Are Social and Meltwater (2023) reported that there are 25.5 percent of users' main reason for using social media is to follow celebrities or influencers also known as KOLs. Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) are individuals or organizations with significant social influence, and their perspectives and recommendations hold substantial attention when it comes to decision-making or perceptions. Examples of KOLs include prominent political figures, respected columnists, and even well-known celebrities (Liana, 2020). These individuals and organizations possess a remarkable ability to shape public opinion, guide consumer choices, and impact various aspects of society due to their extensive reach and credibility.

With the rise of social media influencers, online shopping, and the role of social media apps, fashion trends have grown. Trends change constantly and the younger generations are mostly inclined to follow the latest lifestyle trends and practice them as a fashion trend. Fashion trends in dress, hairstyle, and body shape are driven by modern trendy culture. In the past generation, people found style inspiration in fashion magazines, but for now, social media has become young people's main platform for style inspiration. Rita Campos Griggs, Palomar's Fashion Department Chair stated "social media is running fashion trends. If it is not posted on social media, it won't become trendy. Influencers play a big role in promoting fashion trends and designs," (Conant, 2023). According to a survey conducted by YPulse (2022), there are 41% of the respondents from Gen Z which is people from the age of 11 to 26 look at TikTok for fashion inspiration, while 36% are Instagram, and lastly 27% gain fashion inspiration from influencers.

TikTok is a social media platform that lets its users create, watch, and share 15 to 60-second videos captured on mobile devices. One of the app's distinctive features is its personalized feeds of amusing short videos that are accompanied by music and sound effects. Due to its addictive nature and high levels of interaction, TikTok has become a popular choice among users (D'Souza, 2023). In 2023, TikTok had 1.5 billion monthly active users, with a majority of its users being under the age of 30. Among these users, the age group between 18 to 24 years is the most active, accounting for 34.9 percent of the total user base (Iqbal, 2023). According to research, there is a lot of TikTok users in Malaysia are passive in observation but active in setting the trend in the fashion world, they are more easily influenced by advertisements and always find fashion inspiration from the creators than non-users do (Khoon.

2023). Shoo Wei Khoon (2023) mentioned that fashion stands out among TikTok's content categories because of its creators and influencers. TikTok's format has enabled a wide variety of trend-setting personalities, from well-known models to budding fashion enthusiasts, to showcase styles, review products, and even start new fashion movements, making TikTok users 1.4 times more likely to be fashion pioneers than non-users. In addition to the influence of social media, TikTok users are also particularly susceptible to buying fashion products due to targeted ads on the platform. According to Shoo Wei Khoon (2023), TikTok users are 1.9 times more likely to purchase fashion products, which highlights the significant impact that social media has on consumer behaviour. With the rise of influencer marketing and social media trends, it's important for teenagers to be aware of the potential impact that these platforms can have on their perceptions of fashion and body image.

Instagram, a social network for sharing photos and videos, was introduced in 2010 as a mobile app and later acquired by Facebook in 2012. Initially notable for its square-shaped photos and various filters, it has evolved over the years. Users are no longer limited to square images; they can also share video clips since 2013. Additionally, Instagram now includes features such as Stories, Reels, and Live (Picaro, 2023). As of the most recent data released in January 2023, there are approximately 15.05 million Instagram users in Malaysia (OOSGA, 2023). In this case, there are millions of images posted on Instagram every day, which means they could have millions of style inspirations on Instagram! Everyone can share their outfit and tag the brand, sometimes they could also include some hashtags such as “#ootd” in their post to gain more audiences. According to Ben Unglesbee (2021), Instagram is the most influential social media platform for fashion, with 72% of users saying they have made fashion-related purchases after seeing something promoted on the platform. In Malaysia, Youtubers and Influencers' brand has become a trend now, there is a lot of them who have created their own fashion or beauty brands. For example, Jane Chuck (578k followers) owns a fashion brand called Motherchuckers and also a beauty brand, Chuck's, Phei Yong (843k followers), the founder of the fashion brand, Step8ight. These two are the top social media influencers in Malaysia and they have a lot of followers mainly teenagers. According to Karima Lajnef (2023), social media influencers have a huge impact on controlling and influencing followers' behavior, particularly among teenagers. Therefore, it's no surprise that teenagers would buy their products even though the prices are expensive.

This Study aims to investigate the impact of social media on body image ideals and fashion trends among Malaysian youth, using the cultivation theory as a framework.

1.1 Problem statement

The trend is constantly evolving, but it seems that teenagers are always eager to keep up with it, regardless of whether it's related to fashion or body image. Social media is planted in every teenager's life, and they cannot live without social media. Many students stated that social media had affected how they feel about their appearance, even if they noticed everything shown on social media is not the full image, they still cannot control themselves to compare with others on social media (The New York Times, 2022). Social media frequently shows images of people with perfect bodies and faces but most of them often use filters or other editing tools to enhance their photo, this will lead to an unrealistic beauty standard resulting in body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in both men and women (Pedersen, 2023). Social media also can foster a toxic culture of comparison, teenagers would compare their bodies with other people in order to have the same beauty standard. Kamleshun Rhamphul and Stephanie G Mejias (2018), mentioned that many plastic surgeons have reported encountering people who wanted to look like a "filtered" Snapchat picture.

The influencers or celebrity on social media has the power to bring a trend make them go viral within a matter of days. For instance, the Y2K and vintage trends have recently taken social media by storm, and many teenagers can be seen styling themselves in these styles. It's very common for influencers to recommend products and promote materialism or consumerism, which can lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with appearance and material goods among young people who are exposed to such pervasive advertising. Célia Poncelin (2021) stated that, brands often collaborate with celebrities and their entourages in order to influence three quarters of purchases. Korean Pop culture is one of the trending cultures currently and many of the luxury brands choose to collaborate with the K-pop idols to increase sales and reach out to a younger audience devoted to these idols. For example, each member of the famous K-pop band Blackpink works with different luxury brands. Lisa works with Celine and Bulgari, Jennie is the ambassador of Chanel and Calvin Klein, Jisoo is represents Dior and Cartier and Rose partnered with Yves Saint Laurent and Tiffany & Co. All the brands hoping to increase their sales as a result of the influences of the idols on social media, those fans would invest a lot of money to support their idols or in other words, they wanted to look like them (The Star, 2023). According to The Star (2023), a psychology professor at Dankook University explained that teenagers are especially likely to follow the lead of K-pop stars when it comes to selecting a luxury brand. This trend may also be dangerous, as teenagers usually don't have the financial means to afford these luxury products.

As mentioned earlier, the influence of social media on teenagers is undeniable. It has become an integral part of their lives, and they cannot imagine living without it. Despite being aware that social media only shows a partial image of reality, many students still struggle with comparing themselves to others on these platforms, which can affect their self-esteem, particularly in regard to their appearance. Moreover, influencers on social media have a significant impact on their followers. They can easily influence their style, thinking, and even behaviours. Social media has created a culture of trends, where everything from "trending cafes" to "hidden spots" for taking pictures are discovered and shared on these platforms. Often, these trends are initiated by social media influencers, leading teenagers to develop a sense of vanity as they try to keep up with the latest trends. Unfortunately, this has also led to some people resorting to buying fake followers or likes, or even renting luxury products, just to capture the perfect photo to post on social media. HBO also has a documentary called "Fake Famous" and this show has revealed the real progress of becoming a social media influencer, this show is a kind of "social experiment" in which they will simply choose three people to make them become Instagram Influencer and have a team of experts from styling, director and social media to supports (Fry, 2020). According to the UCSI Poll Research Centre, of 1000 respondents, 34% of them aged between 18 and 20 wanted to be a social media influencer (Jeevita, 2023). This highlights the significant influence that social media has on teenagers today. Therefore, it's important to understand how social media affects teenagers' perceptions of their body image ideals and fashion trends and the study will also using cultivation theory to examine how does social media affects body image ideals and fashion trends among Malaysian youth,.

1.2 Research objective and Research question

Research Questions

1. To what extent do Malaysia teenagers rely on social media platforms for body image ideals and fashion trend?
2. What are the perceptions of Malaysia teenagers regarding the authenticity and reality of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media platforms?
3. How does the fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media platforms impact their self-esteem and self-image?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the extent of reliance of Malaysian teenagers on social media platforms for body image ideals and fashion trends.
2. To explore the perceptions of Malaysian teenagers regarding the authenticity and reality of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media platforms.
3. To examine the relationship between the presentation of fashion trends and body image ideals on social media platforms and its effect on the self-esteem and self-image of teenagers.

1.3 Significance of study

Social Media has become an integral part of everyone's life and it is important to understand the impact of the social media on teenagers, especially since young people are the future pillars of our country. This study investigates the extent to which Malaysian teenagers rely on social media for their body image ideals and fashion trends, also the potential positive or negative impact it may have. It is crucial in understanding how these social media platforms affects this target demographic particularly in regard to their thinking, style and behaviour.

The research aims to provide a clearer picture of the role of various social media platforms in shaping fashion trends and body image ideals. By knowing the preferences of teenagers on different platforms, nuanced insights can be gained into their online behaviour and preferences. Plus, the study also highlights the significance of social media influencers in shaping trends and influencing behaviours among teenagers. Understanding the role of influencers in shaping teenagers' perceptions of fashion and body image is crucial in comprehending the broader socio-cultural implications of social media.

On the other hand, the issues of unrealistic beauty standards portrayed on social media platforms will be recognized in this study with its potential impacts on body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. The research findings can provide valuable information for the society to develop interventions or create some strategies to promote healthier body image perceptions

among teenagers. This study also explores teenagers' perception on the authenticity and reality of body image ideals and fashion trends portrayed on social media as it is important for understanding the impact of social media on their self-esteem and self-image. This aspect addresses the potential discrepancy between online representation and real-life experiences, which contributes valuable insights into their psychological effect.

Lastly, the findings of this study aim to benefit society as a whole, including parents, teenagers, and social media influencers. By exploring the impact of different social media platforms and influencers, the study provides valuable insights into the potential positive or negative consequences of social media use.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Social media use among teenagers

Social media refers to any platform that enables users to share various forms of media, including pages, videos, and text, in different formats. These platforms facilitate communication and connection between individuals, whether they are acquaintances or strangers (Kudumula, 2022). Social networking sites have become increasingly powerful tools for sharing information, shaping opinions, connecting people from different domains and cultures, promoting participation, and facilitating communication like never before (Kulandairaj, 2014). They have transformed the way we interact with each other and have provided us with a platform to express our thoughts, ideas, and experiences to a global audience. These sites have also played a significant role in shaping public opinion and have given a voice to those who were previously unheard. Besides, a study surveyed 593 middle school students and found that they primarily use social media to connect with friends, share pictures, and stay updated on others' activities. However, the students also expressed concerns about social media, including inappropriate content, privacy issues, cyberbullying, negative interactions, and the risk of being stalked or hacked (Martin et al., 2018).

According to Demandsage (2023), there are 4.9 billion social media users globally, which means 60.49% of the world population use social media. Meltwater (2023) also reported that the most active social media users are those born during the internet boom, aged 25-34, who make up 31.5% of the entire population. This demographic accounts for roughly 8.4 million users. Additionally, almost a fourth of the population of Malaysia, or 28.6% of users, are aged below 25 years old. This highlights the importance of parental control over social media sites like Instagram and TikTok, especially for minors, as anyone can access content online. Teenagers may not fully comprehend the potential consequences of internet usage due to their inexperience, limited ability to regulate themselves, and vulnerability to peer influence. Therefore, there is a risk involved as they explore and experiment with various social media platforms (O'Keeffe et al., 2011). It is widely acknowledged that excessive use of social media platforms such as Facebook can have a detrimental effect on teenagers' mental wellbeing. Researchers have even termed this phenomenon as "Facebook Depression", which occurs when teenagers become addicted to social networking and consequently experience depression. This addiction can cause them to become isolated, leading to a lack of real-world social interaction and sometimes even drug abuse as a way of coping (Sabti et al, 2017). Moreover, recent

research has delved deeper into the connection between social media usage, social comparison, and one's perception of their body image. For instance, Di Gesto et al. (2022) conducted additional correlational and experimental studies, which revealed that exposure to likes on Instagram pictures can lead to an increase in body dissatisfaction, particularly among women. Similarly, a study conducted by Brown and Tiggemann (2016) found that viewing images of attractive celebrities and peers on social media can have adverse effects on women's body image.

However, social media could also bring a lot of benefits to the teenagers. We know that social media is one of the significant tools for everyone to get in touch. An article from Akram (2018) stated making friends and socializing is a crucial aspect of growing up as it enables children to interact with each other, share ideas, and gain knowledge, ultimately helping them to develop a sense of confidence as they navigate through life. The study also found that many students struggle to find a platform to express their emotions and social networking technologies provide them with an opportunity to voice their thoughts. By giving students the chance to share their perspectives, they can better discern what's right and wrong for themselves (Akram, 2018).

2.1 social media and body image ideals (media influence on body image)

According to the study of Holland and Tiggemann (2016), social media platforms are known for their visual nature and have often been characterized as being appearance-focused and centered around self-presentation. It is supported by another study which shown that appearance-focused social media can have a detrimental impact on body image and related outcomes, similar to the effects of traditional media (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). In today's world, beauty is subjective and varies from person to person. While some may consider a skinny physique to be beautiful, there are others who find beauty in a more fuller figure. However, with the rise of social media and digital platforms, there has been a trend of promoting a certain standard of beauty, which includes being skinny, having fair skin, and being tall. This trend has influenced many people's perception of beauty. According to a study from Noh, J.W., Kwon, Y.D., Yang, Y., Cheon, J. & Kim, J. (2018) that compared the perceptions of body image and weight status between South Korea and Taiwan. The findings showed that in South Korea, the over-perception of weight was more prominent compared to Taiwan. Additionally, the same study also showed that females were more susceptible to societal pressures for thinness and the misperception of the ideal body than males in both countries. Moreover, In Japan, the emphasis on physical appearance is still mainly on being thin rather than having a muscular physique (Yamamiya et al., 2016).

Social media platforms can have a significant impact on our perception of beauty standards. With the constant stream of images and messages that we are exposed to, it's only natural that our ideas of what is considered beautiful can slowly begin to shift over time. Research has shown that social media sites can have a negative impact on body image, especially when it comes to sharing and viewing photos. Exposure to body positive images, captions or even comments on social media showed mixed results in reducing body dissatisfaction. A recent study had done research and shows that young women and men who view idealized images on social networking sites (SNSs) become more dissatisfied with their bodies (Floravanti et al., 2022). This effect is mainly due to the act of comparing one's appearance to others while viewing these images, rather than a general tendency to compare oneself to others. However, there is another study found that looking at images with positive appearance comments did not increase body dissatisfaction compared to images with no comments, anyhow, the addition of a reality check comment did decrease body dissatisfaction, confirming the researchers' hypothesis, the researchers also suggests that incorporating reality check comments could help women counteract the negative impact of Instagram imagery on body image (Tiggemann & Velissaris, 2020). Plus, a study found that featuring average-size male models in advertisements is equally effective as muscular models, promoting positive body image for both men and women, irrespective of beauty ideals internalization (Diedrichs et al, 2010).

Moreover, there is a significant amount of content on social networking sites that showcases idealized body images, health foods, diets and exercise, these types of posts typically receive high levels of engagement and have caused concern about the potential negative impact of increased social media use on mental health such as eating disorder among individuals (Marks et al., 2020). Indeed, various studies have highlighted the impact of social media on beauty standards and body image perceptions. These platforms often promote specific ideals, such as thinness, and this trend is not limited to a particular region or culture. The visual nature of social media, coupled with the pressure to conform to these ideals, can lead to negative body image perceptions and even eating disorders. Additionally, the curated and filtered nature of social media can create a distorted reality, where individuals feel inadequate or dissatisfied with their appearance. It is important to acknowledge these influences and promote body positivity and diversity on social media platforms.

2.2 Fashion Trend in social media

In today's era social media has become a popular platform for fashion consumers to share and discover the latest trends. With the rise of social media influencers, anyone can now

become a "trendsetter" by sharing their fashion, beauty, and fitness tips. The platform has become a hub for people to showcase their unique style and connect with others who share similar interests. With the ability to reach a vast audience, social media has given fashion enthusiasts a voice and a platform to express themselves. A study found that millennials who crave variety and express it through fashion are more active on social media platforms and those who closely follow trendsetters are also more likely to engage in social media behaviour (Liang, et al., 2019). Additionally, the same study also mentioned that increased social media engagement encourages millennials to become trendsetters themselves, even if fashion was not previously a significant interest. Besides, the degree of success of a fashion trend is determined by how the society perceives and evaluates it. Therefore, the impact of the trend can be gauged by the level of approval it receives from the society, which is influenced by various motivational factors that shape people's values and behaviours (Saravanan & Nithyaprakash, 2015). Fashion trends are constantly evolving, and social media has become an essential platform for fashion consumers to stay up-to-date with the latest styles. With the help of social media, fashion fans can stay on top of the latest trends and find inspiration for their own unique style. The study explores the impact of social media on the fashion industry, utilizing a sample of 130 respondents from five organizations through convenience sampling, revealing a significant correlation of 45.4% and a predictive relationship where social media emerges as a significant predictor of the fashion industry (Ahmad et al., 2015).

Moreover, it's true that nowadays, teenagers are increasingly relying on the internet to keep up with the latest fashion trends. With the rise of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, it's easier than ever for young people to discover new styles and find inspiration for their own outfits. Many teenagers also turn to fashion blogs, online magazines, and even YouTube channels to learn about the latest fashion trends and get advice on how to put together different looks. Online shopping has also become a popular way for teenagers to buy clothing and accessories, allowing them to easily shop for the latest styles without leaving their homes. According to a study from Kulandairaj (2014), it appears that a large number of respondents are actively observing brand and product advertisements on social media platforms. Furthermore, 75% of respondents are members of Facebook fan pages. On the other hand, it seems that a majority of the respondents are being influenced by social media when it comes to their fashion choices. Plus, the researcher found out among 250 respondents, majority of them seem to be influenced by social networking sites when it comes to fashion, trends, and style (Kulandairaj, 2014). TikTok for business also reported that they are 1.9x of TikTok users are more likely to buy fashion products from ads on TikTok than non-users (Khoon, 2023).

Moreover, a research study from McCarthy (2013) stated social media has a significant influence on fashion consumption among college-age individuals and this is achieved through the spread of ideas and styles, as well as setting trends. All in all, it's clear that the internet has had a profound impact on the way that teenagers approach fashion, making it easier and more convenient than ever for them to stay up-to-date with the latest trends.

2.2.1 Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) leading trend and the influences towards teenagers

With the rise of social media platforms like Instagram, fashion enthusiasts have access to an endless stream of fashion inspiration, from runway shows to street style looks. Social media influencers and celebrities have also played a significant role in shaping fashion trends in recent years. By sharing their outfits and fashion tips with their followers, they have become major fashion influencers and have created a new kind of fashion culture that is accessible to everyone. Athena Choi (2016) suggest that visual-oriented social media platforms have given rise to a novel communication model facilitating interaction between the emerging generation of fashion image creators and their audience. It is clear that a growing trend among young fashion enthusiasts is to actively participate in the industry by establishing themselves as successful bloggers as these individuals are adept at crafting their unique styles and conveying their creative ideas through the sharing of fashion-related content. Casaló, L., Flavián, C. & Sánchez, S. (2020) conducted a study on Instagram influencers and their impact on consumer behaviour. The study focused on a fashion-oriented Instagram account and found that users who were perceived as opinion leaders possessed qualities such as originality and uniqueness. The research also showed that opinion leadership had a significant influence on consumer behavioural intentions towards both the influencer and the fashion industry. Siti Nurfadila and Setyo Riyanto (2020) also stated in their study, that social media influencers wield significant influence over consumer purchasing decisions, shaping trends and defining what is considered essential in fashion. Consumers often emulate their style, viewing influencers as experts in the respective product category. Moreover, a report from TikTok for Business stated TikTok users are 1.5x more likely to discover social media creators for the latest fashion trends than non-users (Khoon, 2023).

In the present era, influencer marketing has become a crucial marketing strategy for most brands, mainly because it helps to boost sales and enhance the brand image. Brands often collaborate with popular social media content creators, Instagram influencers, celebrities, and K-pop idols, among others, to promote their products and services. A recent study by Hsiao, S., Wang, Y., Wang, T. & Kao, T. (2020) revealed that in fashion social media, the popularity of the content creator has a positive impact on the post's popularity. Therefore, private label

owners often use popular content creators to promote their brands and products. The study also suggested that posts that have both private labels and national brands have a positive spillover effect on post popularity. This, in turn, improves stakeholders' awareness of private labels and their products. Consequently, national brands have a positive impact on post popularity, which helps to attract more customers to private label products.

It is true that Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) are often seen as trendsetters and are invited to attend various events related to fashion, food, and lifestyle. Their influence on social media is significant, and the followers are often seen emulating their style and behaviour. The impact of KOLs on consumer behaviour is particularly evident among teenagers who are easily influenced by the opinions and recommendations of these social media personalities. Research suggests that celebrities, especially on Instagram, have a significant impact on the purchasing behaviour of young female users (Djafarova et al., 2017). However, the same study also mentioned that non-traditional celebrities such as bloggers, YouTubers, and Instagrammers are even more powerful, as participants perceive them as more credible and relatable than traditional celebrities. This is supported by another study from Nouri (2018), the study delves into the influence that micro-celebrities on YouTube and Instagram wield when it comes to shaping fashion and beauty trends in pop culture, which is greater than that of traditional celebrities, this is due to the micro-celebrities creating a sense of community and connection with their followers through engagement, authenticity, and reliability. The power of KOLs lies in their ability to connect with their audience and create a sense of trust, which ultimately leads to increased revenue for brands and businesses. Nowadays, there is also have a lot of celebrities or social media influencers started selling products on the live stream platforms like TikTok live. In a study by Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020), the researchers investigated how live streaming can help social commerce sellers build consumer trust and engagement. The study proposed a framework to examine the relationships between perceived value of live streaming, customer trust, and engagement. The findings suggested that symbolic value had a direct and indirect effect on customer engagement, while utilitarian and hedonic values indirectly affected customer engagement through customer trust in products and sellers. In essence, these studies underscore the pivotal role of trust as the key characteristic of influencers, emphasizing its paramount importance for companies seeking to thrive in the dynamic landscape of consumer engagement. Social media influencers also are considered more effective endorsers of products.

Over the past few years, South Korea has gained immense popularity globally, attracting millions of admirers and followers with its K-Cuisine, K-Fashion, K-Drama, and K-POP, also known as the Korean Wave. K-Pop idols are considered as key opinion leaders (KOLs), as they have a large following and can significantly impact today's teenagers. They are known for their perfect body shape, fashion style, and good looks, which is why their fashion sense is highly sought after. Additionally, Korean teenagers are known for their unique fashion style, which is different from the Western countries. The uniqueness of Korean-style clothes lies in the bright colours and easy combination with Asian skin tones. K-Pop idols' fashion choices are in great demand, and fans try to imitate their styles, from outfits to brands (Almaani & Tjahyadi, 2023).

The Korean culture has become a trend for some, while for others, it has become a way of life. The K-POP idol system has created a thriving market with a wide range of products, both tangible and intangible. Idol Goods are products based on the image of K-POP artists and designed to meet the demands of fans. Nowadays, many luxury fashion brands have started collaborating with K-pop idols as their ambassadors. For example, Jung Kook from BTS is the ambassador of Calvin Klein. BTS has solidified its position as a prominent Korean popular music group within the global mainstream music market and their fashion sense is drawing considerable interest, garnering features on the social media platforms of international media and the general public (Kim, 2020). Besides, K-pop fans are known for their high loyalty towards their idols and don't mind spending money on merchandise and concert tickets to support them, this activity is not only a form of support, but it is also an expression of personal enjoyment and love for K-pop idols (Arisandi et al, 2023). In addition, another study also stated clothing products in the Idol Goods sector are of significant importance and widely purchased by consumers, those fans consume fashion merchandise because of emotional stimulation, uniqueness motivation, experience consumption (recreational motivation), and Idol relationships (Zaharieva, 2022).

2.3 Authenticity of image on social media (Causing of social comparison and Low self-esteem among teenagers)

It's true that social media has become a platform for people to showcase their lives and share their experiences with their followers. However, with the rise of social media influencers and celebrities, the authenticity of these social media posts has become a topic of concern. Many people tend to portray a perfect life on their social media accounts, with carefully curated photos and captions that often don't reflect the reality of their daily lives. The posts from social

media can create unrealistic expectations and put pressure on others to live up to those standards, which can ultimately lead to feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem. Research has found that exposure to manipulated Instagram photos can lead to lower body satisfaction in comparison to exposure to non-manipulated selfies from online peers. This effect was particularly pronounced in girls with a higher tendency to make social comparisons. In contrast, girls with a lower tendency to compare themselves with others had a similar body image after exposure to either original or manipulated Instagram photos (Kleemans, 2016). Besides, Women who take and post untouched selfies to social media have reported feeling more anxious, less confident, and less physically attractive afterward compared to those who posted retouched photos. These harmful effects of selfies were found even when participants could retake and retouch their selfies (Mills, et al., 2018). In addition, another study found that taking and editing selfies resulted in increased negative mood and facial dissatisfaction. The extent of editing predicted the degree of increase in facial dissatisfaction. It was concluded that investing heavily in and editing one's self-presentation on social media is a detrimental activity for young women. (Tiggemann, et al., 2020). There is also another study from Trudy Hui Hui Chua and Leanne Chang (2016) investigated how teenage girls use social media to present themselves, specifically through selfies, and how peer feedback affects their self-esteem and beauty standards. The results highlight the discrepancy between their self-perception and their perceived peer standards, which contributes to their efforts to present themselves in a certain way and seek validation from their peers. The study sheds light on the challenges that teenage girls face in the digital age and provides recommendations for future research and interventions.

The posts from social media can create unrealistic expectations and put pressure on others to live up to those standards, which can ultimately lead to feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem. Studies have shown that exposure to idealized images on social networking sites can lead to increased body dissatisfaction among young men and women, appearance comparison, or the tendency to compare oneself to others, is a key factor that mediates this effect (Fioravanti, et al., 2022). Plus, constant exposure to carefully curated images of others on social networking sites can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction with one's own body and appearance (Herring, 2015). The same study also stated the pressure to present oneself in a certain way online and the constant comparison to others can contribute to negative body image and low self-esteem. Furthermore, the availability of photo editing tools and filters can create unrealistic beauty standards and further perpetuate these negative effects. Additionally, according to Panjra and Tiwari (2021), fashion influencers tend to portray an idealized image of their lives on social media, which can contribute to unrealistic body standards. The findings

of this study suggest that the effects of following fashion influencers are multifaceted. While it can have a negative impact on mental health, leading to body image dissatisfaction and a reduced sense of self-worth, it can also have positive effects such as motivation, inspiration, and increased awareness of the latest trends.

2.4 Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner's cultivation theory is a fundamental component of our knowledge of media influences. It implies that those who watch television on a daily basis are more receptive to the messages it conveys. Their perceptions and worldview eventually coincide with the recurring themes and stories that are shown on television as a result of this effect (Communication Theory, 2012). Gerbner's research on the effects of traditional media has switched to examining how watching a lot of television alters viewers' worldviews. He discovered that those who watch a lot of television had a tendency to believe that the world is more dangerous—a phenomena called "mean world syndrome. (Vinney, 2019) " Gerbner and his colleagues also developed ideas like resonance, which occurs when media messages match viewers' experiences and magnify their impacts, and mainstreaming, which occurs when heavy viewers adopt a uniform worldview despite coming from a variety of backgrounds.

2.4.1 Cultivation Theory towards Social Media

Although the cultivation idea was first used in relation to television, social media today has a significant influence on how individuals perceive the world and form their opinions. For many people, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have supplanted television as their main media source and are now essential components of daily life. According to a study by Nevzat (2018), social media platforms should be the subject of an institutional analysis that views them as strong institutions that influence social reality rather than only as means of communication. Similar to television, social media platforms have their own goals and interests, which have an impact on the messages and information that are shared there. A study from Khalid et al. (2020) support aspects of the cultivation theory by suggesting that prolonged exposure to Facebook may influence adolescents' moral, social, and cognitive development in Pakistan. Besides, in today's society, where thin and skinny body types are often glorified, social media platforms can have a negative impact on people's perception of their bodies. This can lead to eating disorders, as individuals compare themselves to the images they see on social media. A study by Kendall (2015) found that Instagram use was closely linked to the severity of eating disorders among participants. On the other hand, influencer marketing has become a common strategy for fashion brands nowadays, where they invite social media influencers or celebrities as their brand ambassadors to promote their brand.

However, when users consistently view these posts, it can have some impacts on them. A study from Vasquez (2020) analyses the relationship between Instagram's fashion community and materialistic values, which are promoted through fashion publications, celebrities, and influencers. Fashion narratives at all three levels encourage continuous shopping, unrealistic lifestyle aspirations, and a constant need for new clothing. These materialistic messages drive consumer behaviour, resulting in increased purchasing activity that primarily benefits fashion brands.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0 Research Approach (Quantitative research)

To determine the general findings of the impact of social media on body image ideals and fashion trends among Malaysian youth, this study utilized aspects of quantitative research. Examining and gathering numerical data in order to identify trends, calculate averages, evaluate relationships, and derive general conclusions is known as quantitative research (Fleetwood, n.d.). Processing and interpreting numerical data using statistical techniques is the process of analysing quantitative data. According to Oberiri (2017), the process of conducting quantitative research typically includes formulating a problem statement, generating hypotheses, conducting a literature review, and performing quantitative analysis on the collected data. The gathering of data, which is then quantified and statistically processed to support competing knowledge assertions, is the fundamental component of quantitative research. In contrast to qualitative research methodologies, the use of random sampling in quantitative research makes it easier to summarise, compare, and generalise the results.

3.1 Sampling Design

The research proposes to study the impact of social media on body image ideals and fashion trends among Malaysian youth. Hence, the targeted population for this research is users between the ages of 18 and 32 who use social media. In this study, Google Forms hosted online are utilized, offering accessibility to a wide range of users who can conveniently utilize computers, smartphones, and other electronic devices to participate in the research.

This research using a purposive sampling technique. A group of non-probability sampling techniques known as "purposeful sampling" select units according to particular criteria that are necessary for the sample (Nikolopoulou, 2023). The study's sample of 80 respondents was selected for analysis in this research. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), when focusing primarily on comparatively small sample sizes, purposeful sampling works well. It might be more desirable when aiming to target a certain subset of the population that shares certain traits or when looking into issues that are likely to involve several cases.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

This study paper's quantitative survey is broken up into four sections: Sections A, B, C, and D. 12 demographic questions are included in Section A, covering topics such as age, gender,

family income annually, work status, education level, preference of social media and so on. As for Section B, there are 7 questions on investigating teenagers' dependency on social media for body image ideals and fashion trends, which is RO1. Section C which consists of 5 questions for RO2 is to explore perceptions regarding authenticity and reality on social media. For RO3, Section D consists of 7 questions focus on the influence of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media on teenage self-esteem and self-image.

According to Dossetto (2023), closed-ended questions constrain respondents to choose from predetermined options, such as rating scales (e.g., ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) or multiple-choice selections (e.g., 'Yes' or 'No'). Although they offer limited depth of understanding, their structured nature renders them valuable for quantitative research. Multiple-choice and Yes/No questions are commonly employed in Section A of the questionnaire. Sections B to D predominantly feature the use of a 5-point Likert scale, where responses range from 1 denoting Strongly Disagree to 5 signifying Strongly Agree.

3.3 Procedure

To determine the effectiveness of the questionnaire, a pre-testing method will be used, which involves two participants answering the questionnaire and providing feedback on its understandability. Once the pre-testing is completed, data will be collected from 80 participants using Google Forms. The collected data will be analyzed and presented using Google Forms and Jamovi.

3.4 Proposed Analysis Tool

After the data collection process is finished, the collected data will be evaluated. To put it simply, data analysis is the process of collecting and organising data in order to make sense of it. A computer programme called Jamovi was used to analyse the data. The selection of Jamovi software for statistical analysis in this research is based on its user-friendly interface and simplicity. In addition to its ease of use, Jamovi offers several advantages, including the capability to analyze text data without needing dummy code variables, a straightforward method for ordering variable levels, and a point-and-click approach for changing reference levels in both logistic and linear regression (Jamovi, 2023). Furthermore, Jamovi facilitates the execution of more advanced statistical analyses, such as ANOVA, correlation matrices, t-tests, and descriptive statistics.

3.5 Data Analysis

Once the data is collected, the analysis will be done using Jamovi. Chapter 4 will include pie charts to present and justify the data. Additionally, contingency tables will be used to explore specific connections within the data. A contingency table, also known as a two-way frequency table, is a statistical tool that presents categorical data in terms of frequency counts using a tabular format with at least two rows and two columns. According to Stover (2023), one of the advantages of using a contingency table is that it simplifies basic probability calculations. This can be further facilitated by adding a summary row and column to the table.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

4.0 Section A: Demographic Background

What is your gender?

81 responses

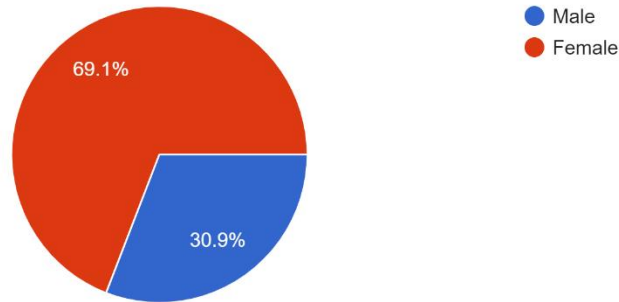


Table A1: Gender

The gender distribution of the 81 participants is shown in Table 1. Of these, 56 individuals (69.1% of the total) are female, and 25 individuals (30.9% of the total) are male.

Which age range you are from?

81 responses

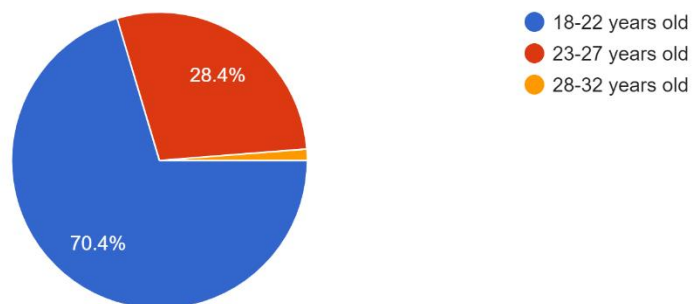


Table A2: Age

The age distribution of the participants is seen in Table 2, where 57 people, or a considerable majority, fall between the 18–22 age range (70.4%). After this, there are 23 people (28.4%) in the second-largest group who are between the ages of 23 and 27. Finally, just 1 individuals (1.2%) are in the 28–32 age bracket, which is a minority.

Ethnicity
81 responses

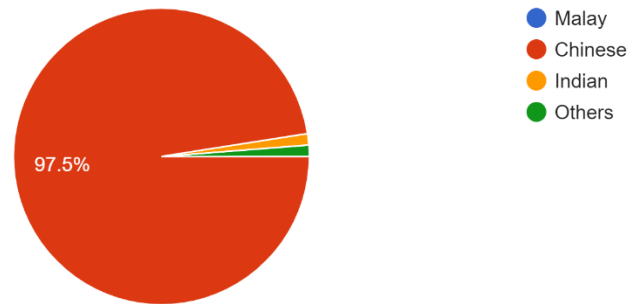


Table A3: Ethnicity

Table 3 shows that 97.5% of the participants, or 79 people are Chinese, making up the majority of the ethnic background. 1 participant (1.2%) of Indian and 1 participant (1.2%) of Malay descent make up the remaining proportion.

Occupation
81 responses

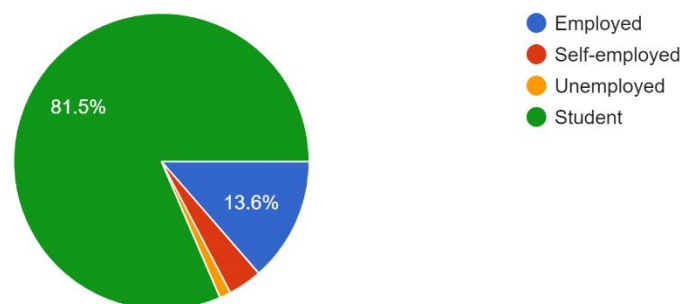


Table A4: Occupation

Table 4 shows that 66 (81.5%) of the total participants are students. The second-largest group after this is made up of 11 participants (13.6%) who are employed. Furthermore, 3 individuals (3.7%) are classed as self-employed, while 1 individual (1.2%) is classified as unemployed.

Which peninsula of Malaysia are you from?

81 responses

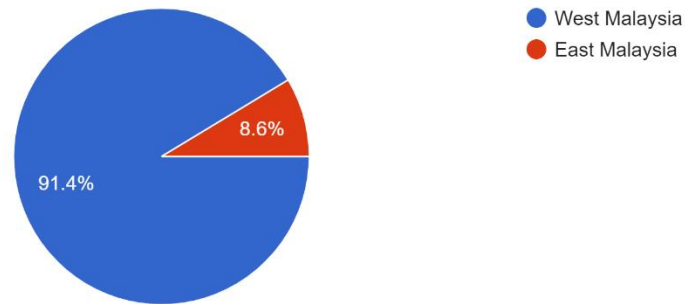


Table A5: Peninsula of Malaysia

Out of the total number of participants, Table 5 shows that 74 (91.4%) are from West Malaysia and the remaining 7 (8.6%) are from East Malaysia.

What is your current Academic level?

81 responses

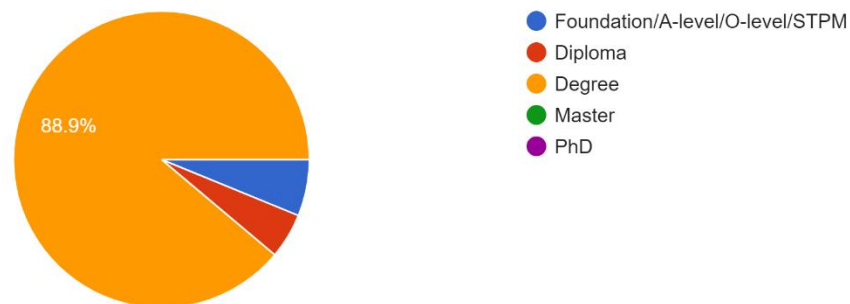


Table A6: Academic level

According to Table 6, 88.9% (72 people) of the participants had a degree as their most common academic level. The remaining participants hold various academic qualifications; 4.9% hold diplomas, and 6.2% hold foundation, A-level, O-level, or STPM qualifications.

Do you used Social Media Platform?

81 responses

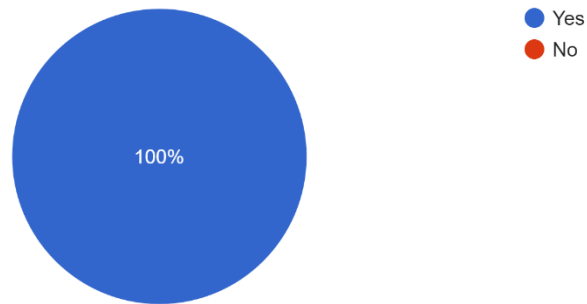


Table A7: Usage of Social Media Platform

Table 7 shows that all participants (100%) make use of social media.

How often do you use social media?

81 responses

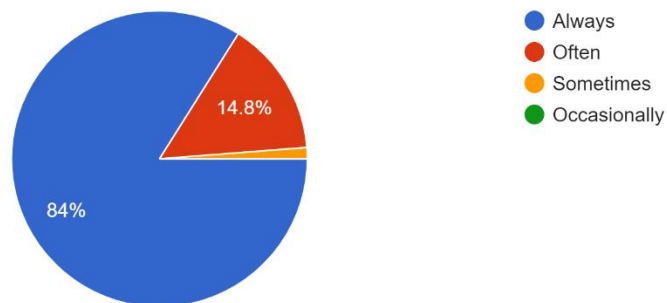


Table A8: Times used in Social Media Platform

Table 8 reveals that 68 participants, or 84% of the sample, always use social media. Furthermore, only 1 person (1.2%) uses social media for sometimes, compared to 12 individuals (14.8%) who use it often.

How much time do you spent on social media per day?

81 responses

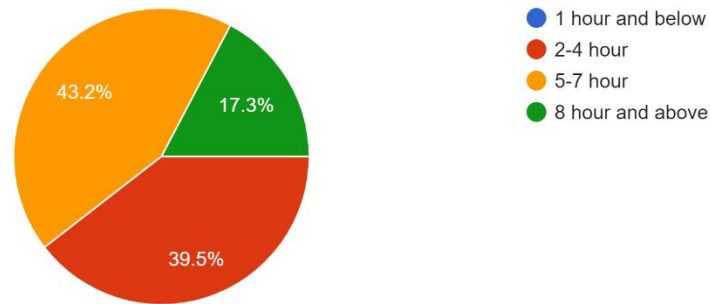


Table A9: Times spent in Social Media Platform

Table 9 illustrates that 35 individuals dedicate 5-7 hours per day to social media, while 32 people allocate 2-4 hours to it. Additionally, 14 individuals spend 8 hours or more on social media.

What are the purposes of using social media?

81 responses

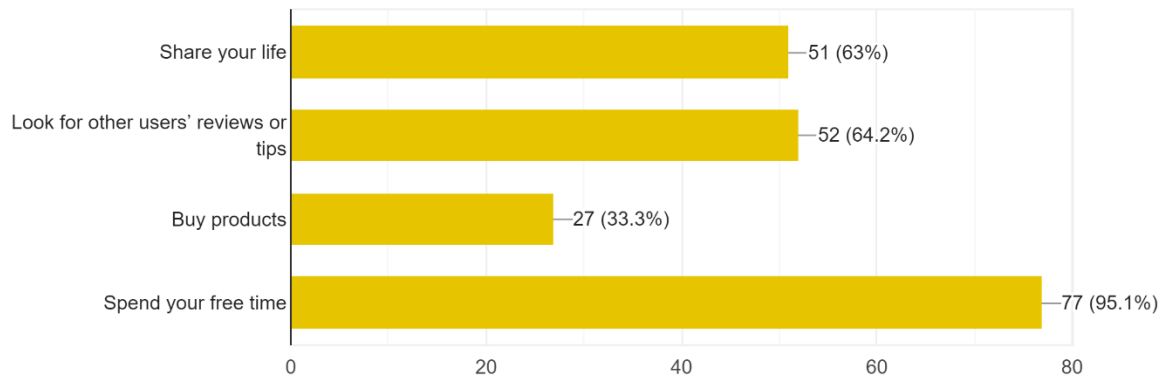


Table A10: Purposes of using social media

According to Table 9, the majority of participants, totaling 77 individuals, use social media to spend their free time. Additionally, two categories show similar results: 52 people utilize social media to look for other users' reviews or tips, and 51 people use it to share their life. Lastly, the remaining 27 people use social media buying products.

Do you used Social Media Platform for exploring body image ideals and fashion trends?

81 responses

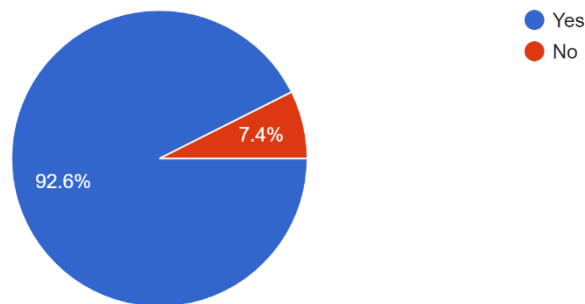


Table A11: Usage of using social media platform for exploring body image ideals and fashion trend

Table 10 shows that the majority of participants, accounting for 92.6% of them, used social media platforms to explore body image ideals and fashion trends, while only 7.4% did not.

Which social media platforms do you use most often for exploring body image ideals and fashion trends?

81 responses

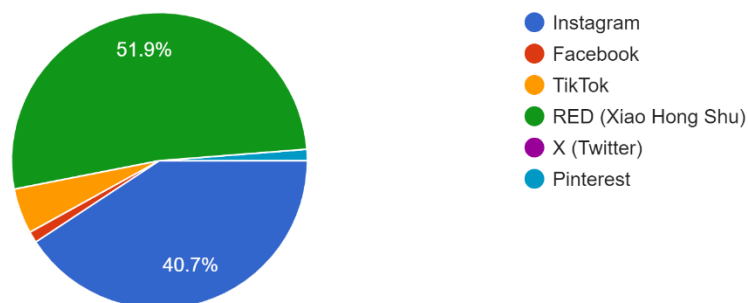


Table A12: Preferring of social media platforms for exploring body image ideals and fashion trends.

According to Table 11, most participants, comprising 51.9% of them use RED (Xiao Hong Shu) to explore body image ideals and fashion trends. The second-largest group utilizes Instagram as their platform, accounting for 40.7%. The remaining percentages are distributed among TikTok (4%), Pinterest (1%), and Facebook (1%).

Do you follow any fashion influencers or celebrities on social media?

81 responses

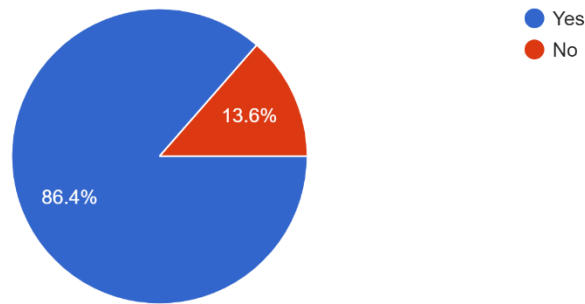


Table A13: Following of fashion influencers or celebrities on social media

As Table 11 shows, the majority of respondents, totalling 86.4% do follow fashion influencers or celebrities on social media, while only 13.6% of them do not.

4.1 Section B: Investigating teenagers' dependency on social media for body image and fashion trends.

Research Objective 1: To investigate the extent of reliance of Malaysian teenagers on social media platforms for body image ideals and fashion trends.

I always follow the fashion trends and body image ideals promoted on social media.

81 responses

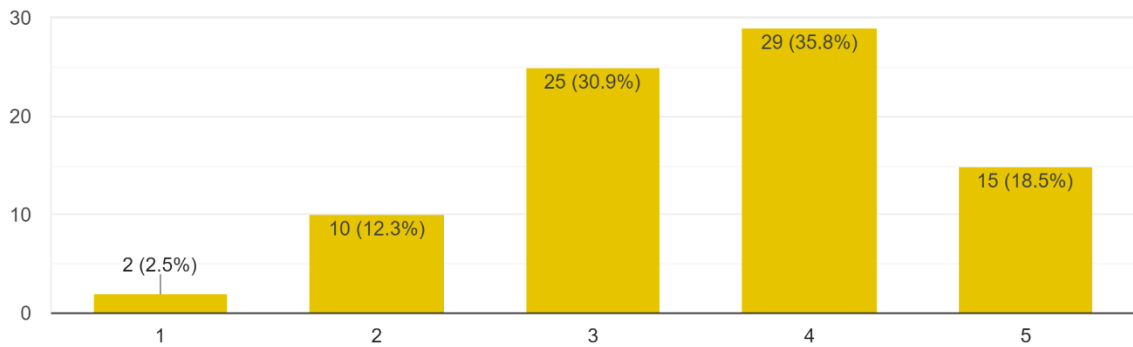


Table B1: Following of fashion trends and body image ideals

Table B1 demonstrates that 29 individuals or 35.8% of the total, strongly agreed with the statement. With 25 persons, the second-highest frequency is 3, at 30.9%.

Social media help me to increase the awareness of fashion trends.

81 responses

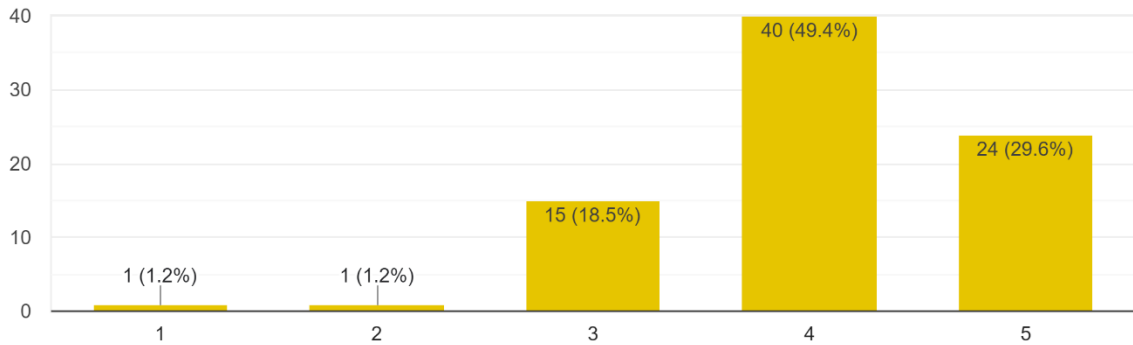


Table B2: Awareness of fashion trend

According to table B2, most of the respondents (49.4%) agree with the statement. Besides, the second highest frequency of answer shows that 24 people (29.6%) are strongly agree with the statement.

I use social media as a platform for expressing my own fashion style and body image ideals.

81 responses

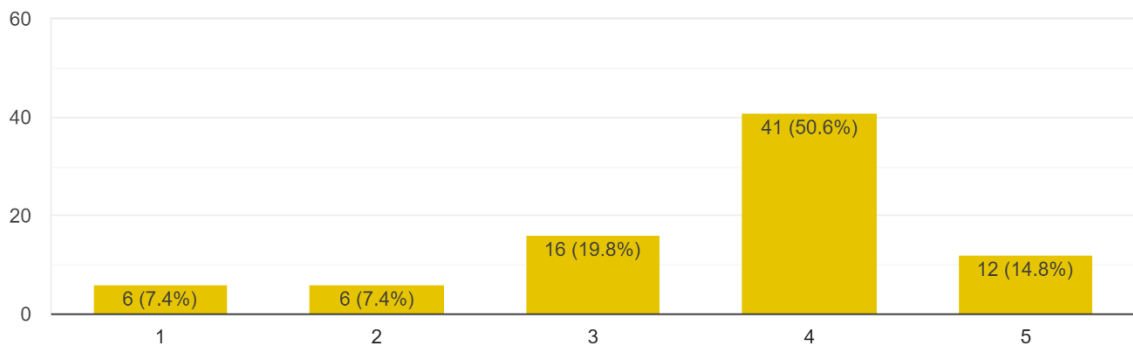


Table B3: Expressing fashion style and body image ideals on social media

Table B3 shows that majority (50.6%) of people agree with this particular statement. While the second highest frequency of answer shows that 16 people (19.8%) are neutral with the statement.

Social media platforms help me to get inspiration for my own fashion choices.

81 responses

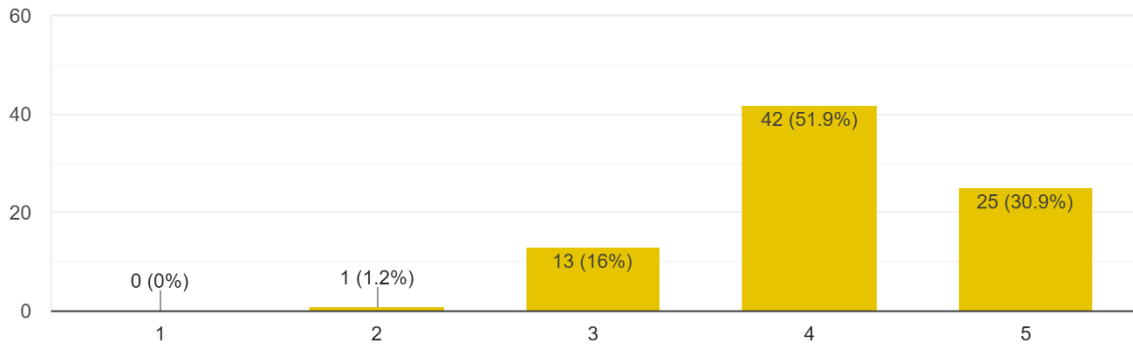


Table B4: Get inspiration for fashion choices on social media.

Table B4 indicates more than a half (51.9%) of respondents agree with the statement. Besides, there is 30.9% of respondents strongly agree with the statement.

The perceptions of body image and fashion trends I've gained from social media influenced my real-life choices, such as clothing purchases or lifestyle decisions.

81 responses

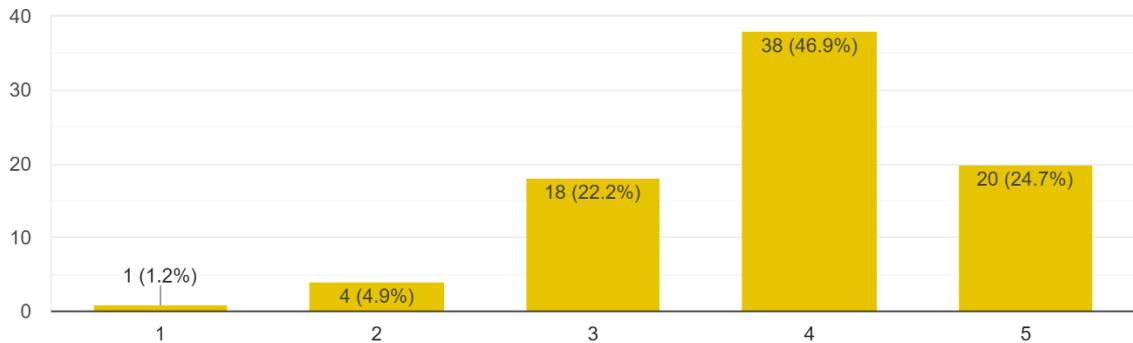


Table B5: Influences towards respondents regarding real-life choices

According to Table B5, the majority of respondents, comprising 46.9% agree with the statement. Additionally, there are similar results between those who strongly agree (24.7%) and those who are neutral (22.2%) towards the statement.

I will buy the fashion and body related products, because it was promoted by an influencer or celebrity.

81 responses

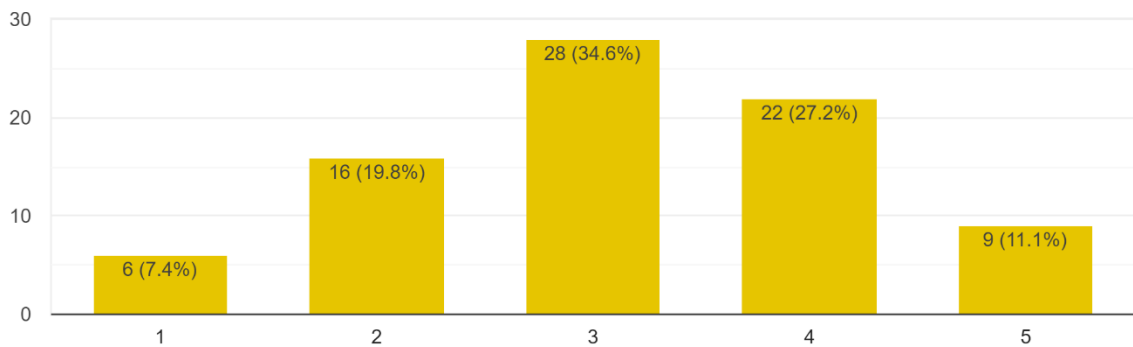


Table B6: Purchase decision influenced by influencer or celebrity.

The results from Table B6 show that the majority of respondents (34.6%) are neutral towards the statement. Secondly, 22 respondents (27.2%) agree with the statement.

I feel pressured to keep up with the latest fashion trends.

81 responses

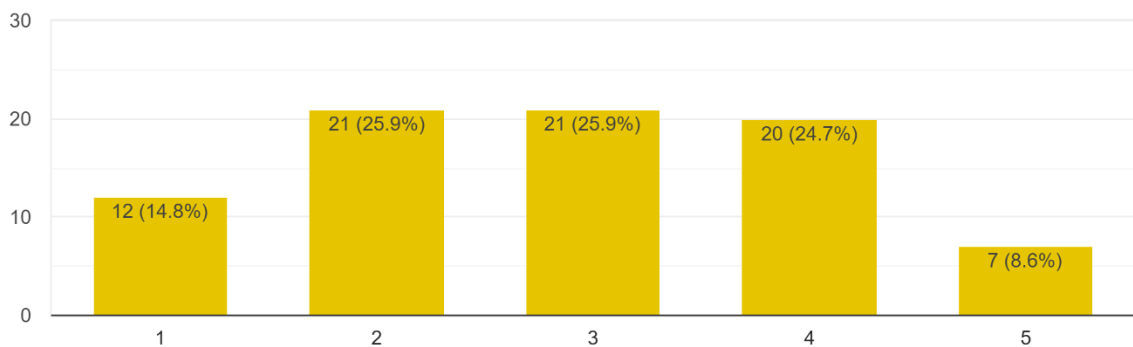


Table B7: The pressure of keeping up with the latest fashion trends.

According to Table B67, the majority of respondents either disagree with the statement or have a neutral opinion of it; both of these frequencies received a score of 21, or 25.9% of the total population. On the other hand, 20 individuals (24.7%) are agree with the statement.

4.2 Section C: Explore perceptions regarding authenticity and reality on social media.

Research Objective 2:

To explore the perceptions of Malaysian teenagers regarding the authenticity and reality of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media platforms.

I believe that influencers provide an authentic representation of their lifestyle on social media.

81 responses

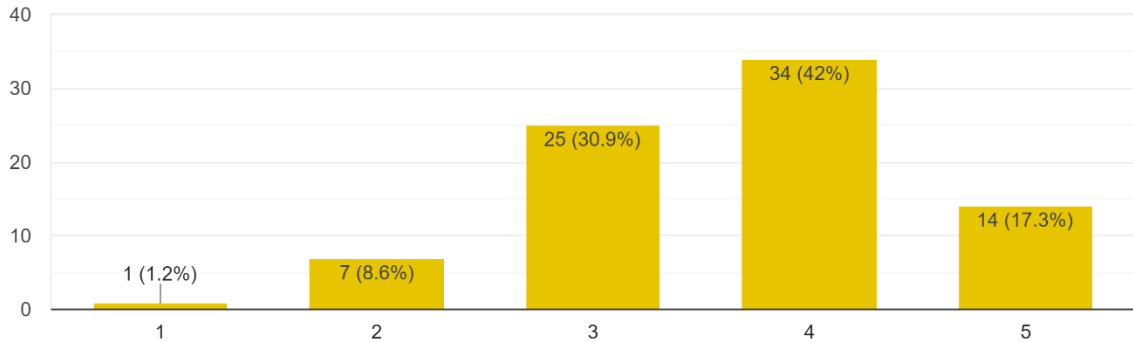


Table C1: Opinion on influencers' authenticity

Table C1 shows that the majority of the respondents (42%) agree on the statement. Secondly, 30.9% of the respondents are neutral toward the statement.

I admire the influencer's lifestyle and want to see more of it.

81 responses

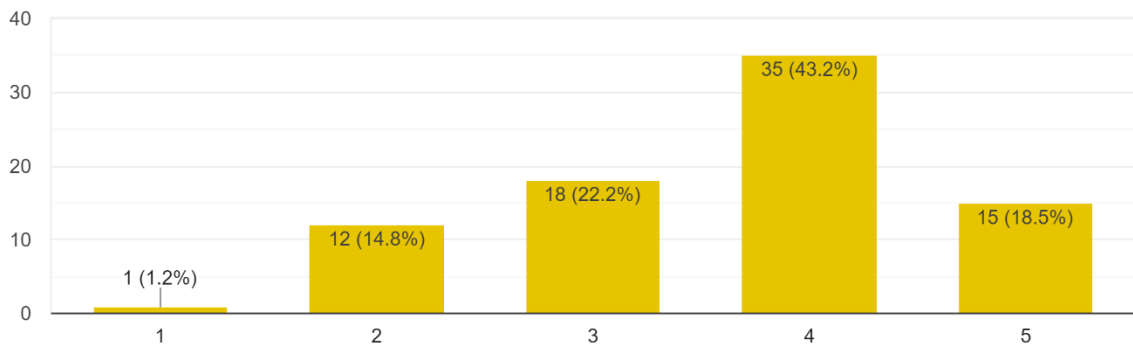


Table C2: Opinion on influencers' lifestyle

According to Table C2, 43.2% of respondents, the highest percentage, agree with the statement. Meanwhile, 22.2% of respondents are neutral toward the statement.

I believe that the fashion trends portrayed on social media are authentic and achievable in real life.
81 responses

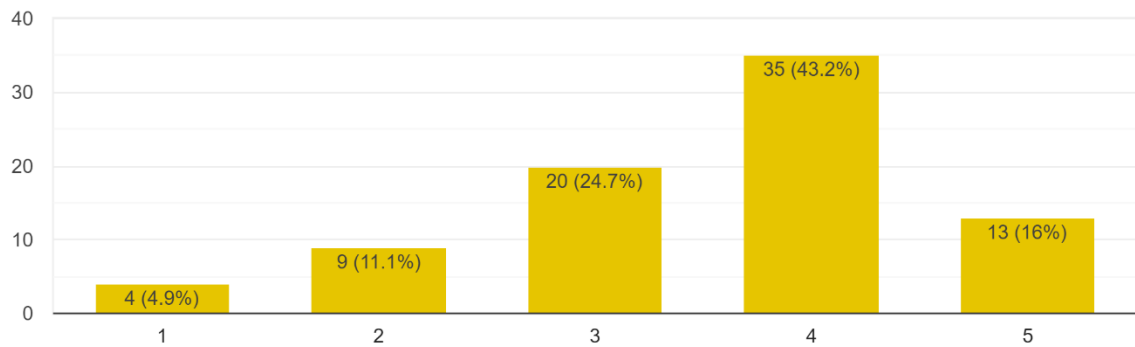


Table C3: Opinion on fashion trend portrayed on social media

Table C3 shows that most of the respondents (43.2%) are agree with the statement. The second highest frequency is 24.7% which is neutral toward the statement.

I believe that the body image ideals portrayed on social media are realistic.
81 responses

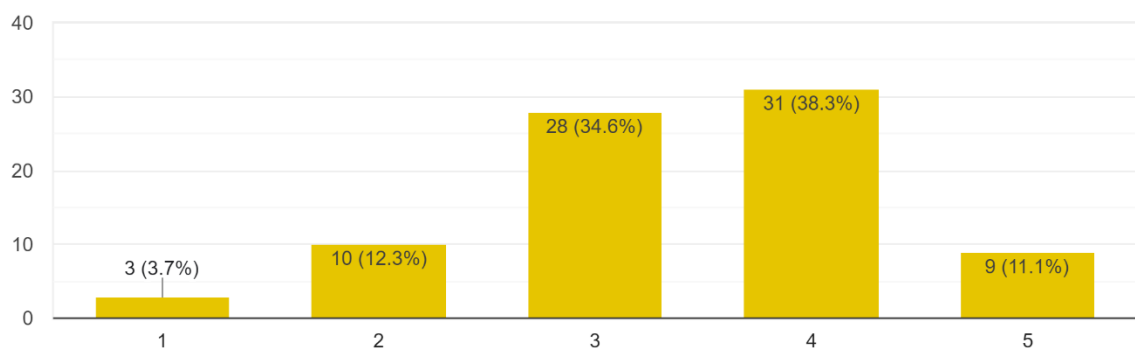


Table C4: Opinion on body image ideals portrayed on social media

Table C4 indicates that 38.3% of the respondents, the highest percentage, agree with the statement, while 34.6%, the second-highest percentage, are neutral towards the statement.

I experienced misled by fashion content on social media

81 responses

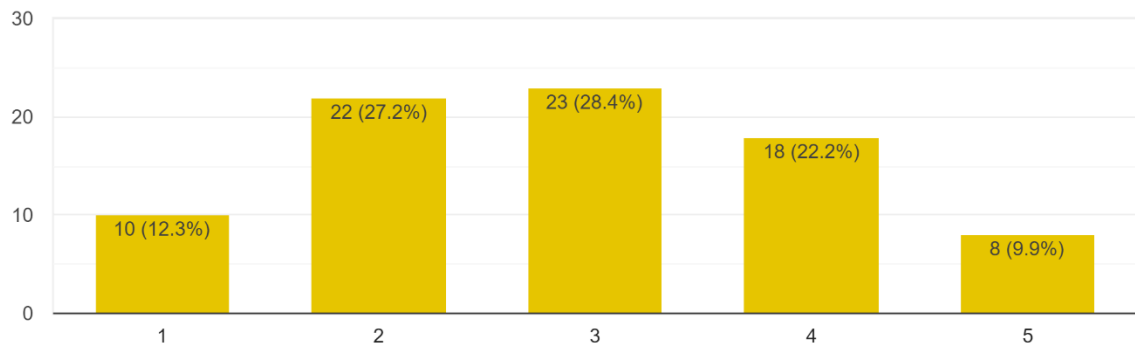


Table C5: Opinion on misled by fashion content on social media

According to the results shown in Table C5, the highest and second-highest percentages are very close, with 28.4% of the respondents being neutral towards the statement and 27.2% of the respondents disagreeing with the statement.

4.3 Section D: The influence of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media on teenage self-esteem and self-image.

Research Objective 3:

To examine the relationship between the presentation of fashion trends and body image ideals on social media platforms and its effect on the self-esteem and self-image of teenagers.

Social media has left me feeling dissatisfied with my current body image after scrolling through social media.

81 responses

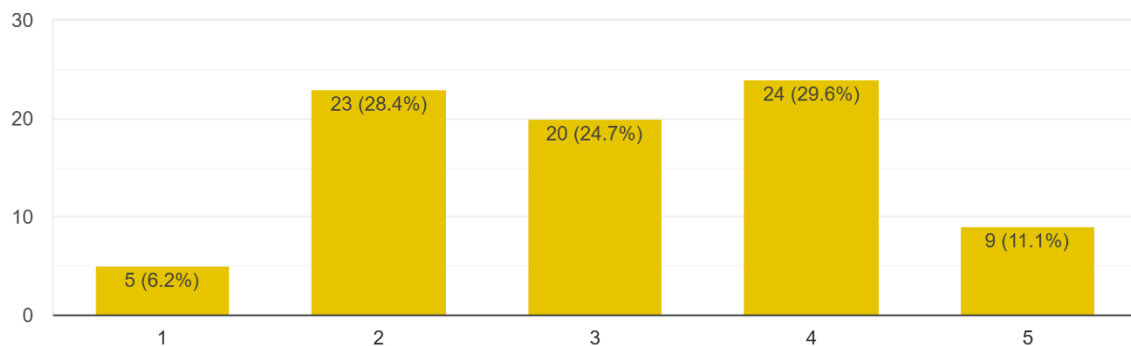


Table D1: The influence of social media on body image

The results shown in Table D1 have very similar percentages between disagree, neutral, and agree. The highest is agree with the statement, which has 24 respondents, followed by the second highest with one less at 23 respondents, and the third is 20 respondents who are neutral towards the statement.

The body image standards on social media impact my self-esteem.

81 responses

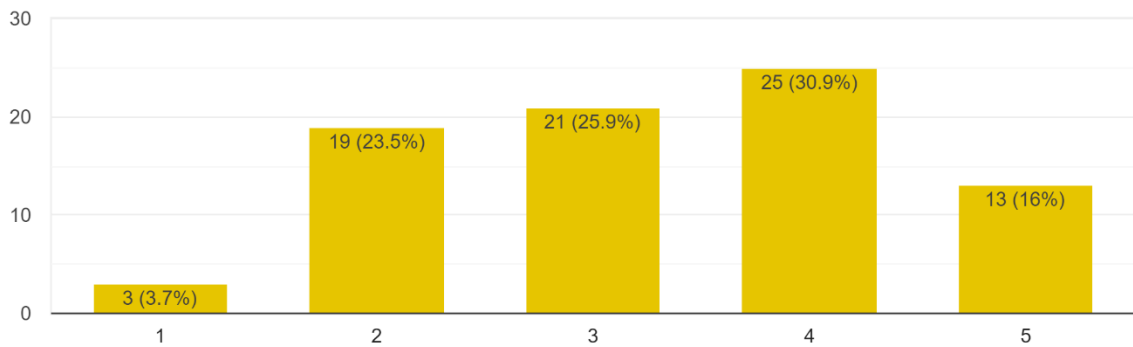


Table D2: The influence of body image ideals portrayed on social media on self-esteem. According to Table D2, the majority of the respondents (30.9%) agree with the statement, while the second highest group comprises 25.9% of respondents who are neutral towards the statement.

I feel a sense of peer pressure to conform to certain body image standards based on what I see on social media.

81 responses

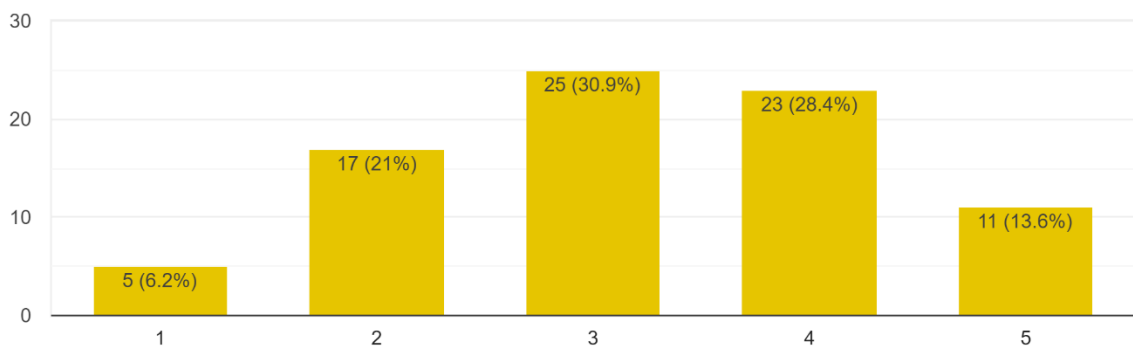


Table D3: Opinion on peer pressure on social media

Table D3 indicates that 30.9%, which is the highest, neutral towards the statement. While the second highest which is 28.4% of respondents are agree with the statement.

I often compare my own body to images or representations of bodies in the social media.

81 responses

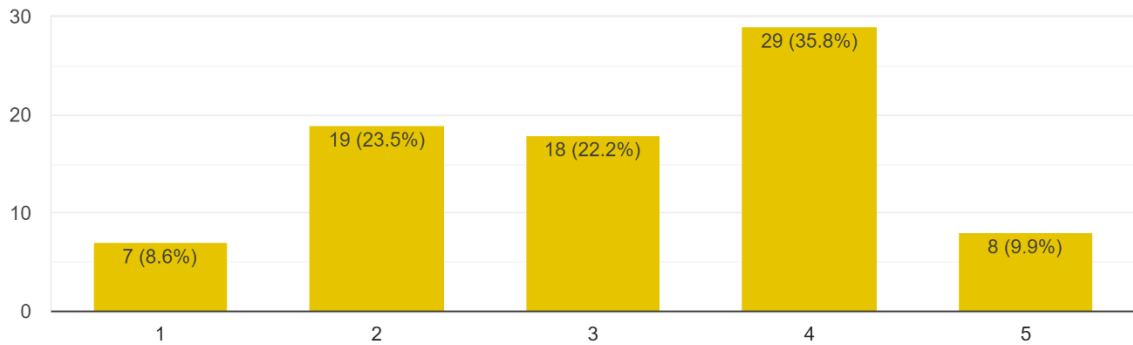


Table D4: Opinion on comparing body image in social media.

Table D4 has clearly shows that majority of the respondents (35.8%) do agree on the statement. While there is also have 23.5% of respondents, which is the second highest, do not agree with the statement.

It's hard for me to expressing my true self on social media.

81 responses

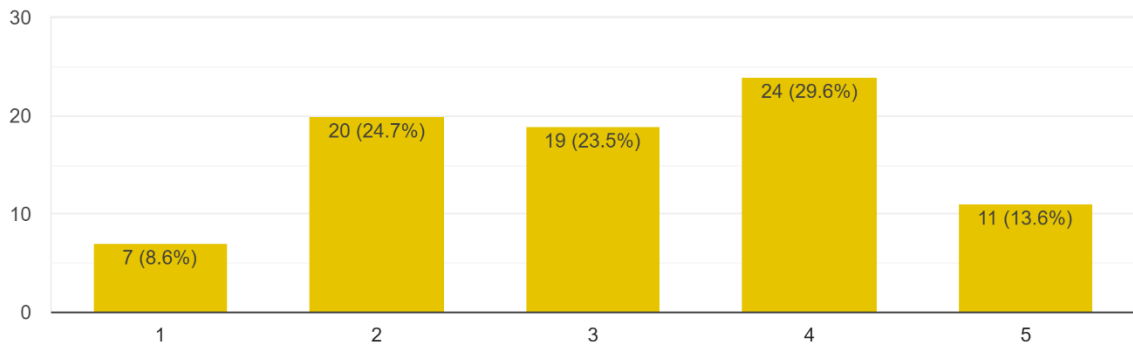


Table D5: Opinion on expressing trueself on social media

According to table above, most of the respondents (29.6%) are agree with the statement. On the other hand, there is 24.7% of respondents who are not agree with the statement.

When feeling dissatisfied with my body image, I tend to seek validation or support on social media.
81 responses

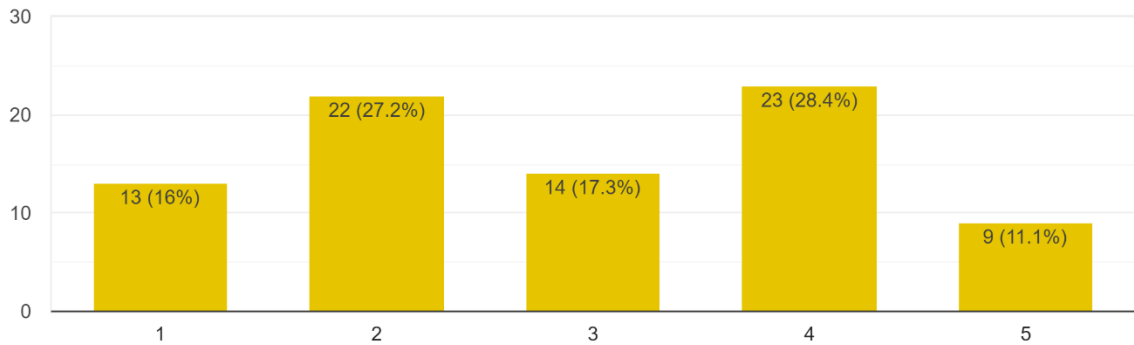


Table D6: Opinion on seeking validation on social media.

The results from Table D6 show that the highest and second highest have only one person difference. Specifically, 23 respondents agree with the statement, while 22 respondents do not agree with the statement.

I spent a lot of time to edit my photos before posting on social media platforms.
81 responses

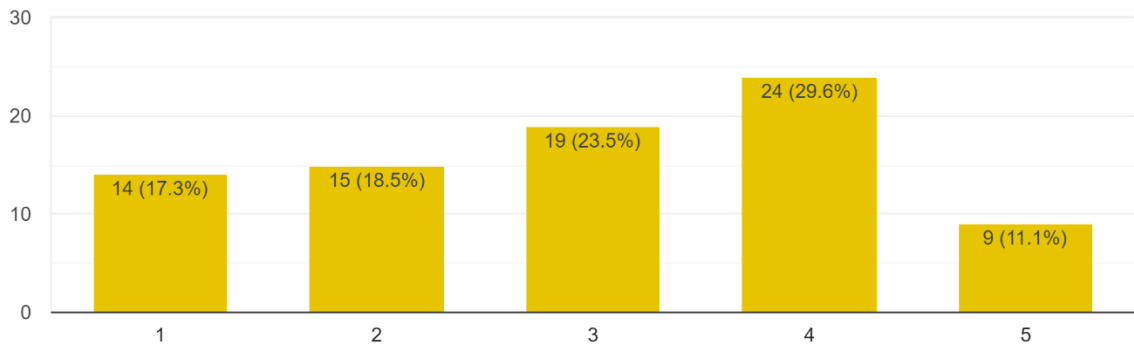


Table D7: Time spend on editing photo before posting.

Table D7 shows that 29.6%, which is the highest percentage, agree with the statement. Secondly, there are 23.5% of the respondents who are neutral towards the statement.

4.4 Contingency Table

Contingency Tables

	Social media help me to increase the awareness of fashion trends.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
I always follow the fashion trends and body image ideals promoted on social media.						
1	0	1	1	0	0	2
2	1	0	5	2	2	10
3	0	0	7	16	2	25
4	0	0	2	19	8	29
5	0	0	0	3	12	15
Total	1	1	15	40	24	81

Table E1: Awareness of fashion trends on social media

Table E1 shows that majority who always follow the fashion trend and body image ideals promoted on social media could help them to increase their awareness of fashion trends.

Contingency Tables

	The perceptions of body image and fashion trends I've gained from social media influenced my real-life choices, such as clothing purchases or lifestyle decisions.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Social media platforms help me to get inspiration for my own fashion choices.						
2	0	1	0	0	0	1
3	1	2	7	2	1	13
4	0	0	9	26	7	42
5	0	1	2	10	12	25
Total	1	4	18	38	20	81

Table E2: Social Media influences on respondents habits.

Table E2 shows that the majority of respondents who gain inspiration from social media have influenced their real-life choices, such as clothing purchases or lifestyle decisions.

Contingency Tables

I always follow the fashion trends and body image ideals promoted on social media.	I will buy the fashion and body related products, because it was promoted by an influencer or celebrity.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	1	0	1	0	0	2
2	2	4	2	2	0	10
3	1	7	10	5	2	25
4	0	5	11	10	3	29
5	2	0	4	5	4	15
Total	6	16	28	22	9	81

Table E3: Social media influencers influences on users purchase decision.

Table E3 shows that even though most of the respondents always follow the fashion trends on social media, they are not completely influenced by the influencers on social media in their purchasing decisions.

Contingency Tables

I always follow the fashion trends and body image ideals promoted on social media.	I feel pressured to keep up with the latest fashion trends.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	1	0	1	0	0	2
2	3	4	2	1	0	10
3	1	8	11	5	0	25
4	7	5	6	9	2	29
5	0	4	1	5	5	15
Total	12	21	21	20	7	81

Table E4: Pressures to keep up with the latest fashion trends.

Table E4 shows average results, with most of the respondents sometimes feeling pressured to

keep up with the latest fashion trends. The same number of respondents feel pressured, while one fewer respondent does not feel pressure.

Contingency Tables

	I admire the influencer’s lifestyle and want to see more of it.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
I believe that influencers provide an authentic representation of their lifestyle on social media.						
1	0	1	0	0	0	1
2	0	5	1	1	0	7
3	0	4	7	12	2	25
4	1	2	7	18	6	34
5	0	0	3	4	7	14
Total	1	12	18	35	15	81

Table E5: Trustworthiness of influencers on social media.

Table E5 shows the majority of respondents believe in what influencers show on social media, and they want to see more of it.

Contingency Tables

	Social media has left me feeling dissatisfied with my current body image after scrolling through social media.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
How much time do you spent on social media per day?						
2-4 hour	1	11	10	7	3	32
5-7 hour	4	8	7	12	4	35
8 hour and above	0	4	3	5	2	14
Total	5	23	20	24	9	81

Table E6: Time spent on social media influences respondents' feelings of dissatisfaction.

The table above shows that respondents who spent 5-7 hours on social media were influenced to feel dissatisfied with their current body image.

Contingency Tables

I feel a sense of peer pressure to conform to certain body image standards based on what I see on social media.	I often compare my own body to images or representations of bodies in the social media.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	3	2	0	0	0	5
2	2	9	3	3	0	17
3	2	3	11	6	3	25
4	0	4	4	13	2	23
5	0	1	0	7	3	11
Total	7	19	18	29	8	81

Table E7: Peer pressure and comparing themselves to the representation of bodies in social media.

Table E7 shows that the majority of respondents who feel a sense of peer pressure also compare themselves to the images or representations of bodies on social media.

Contingency Tables

It's hard for me to expressing my true self on social media.	I spent a lot of time to edit my photos before posting on social media platforms.					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	3	1	0	3	0	7
2	4	6	3	6	1	20
3	4	3	8	4	0	19
4	3	2	6	9	4	24
5	0	3	2	2	4	11
Total	14	15	19	24	9	81

Table E8: Expressing true self on social media.

Table E8 shows that majority of the respondents feels hard for them to expressing their true self on social media and they spend a lot of time to edit their photos before posting.

Chapter 5

Findings & Conclusion

5.1 Findings

The first research objective is to investigate the extent of reliance of Malaysian teenagers on social media platforms for body image ideals and fashion trends. The prevalence of social media platforms has drastically influenced how Malaysian teenagers perceive body image ideals and fashion trends. As supported by Table A11, a staggering majority of the respondents, over 90%, rely on social media to explore these areas. The cultivation effect is highlighted by the extent to which Malaysian youth rely on social media platforms for fashion trends and body image standards. Social media exposure to idealised pictures and lifestyles can shape one's impression of what is deemed desirable or trendy, as seen by the high percentage of respondents who rely on these platforms for trend research and fashion inspiration. Teenagers' opinions of their own bodies and fashion preferences may be impacted by the internalization of these norms as a result of this ongoing exposure. Additionally, Table A10 indicates that 64.2% of the respondents look for reviews and tips from other users, proving social media's impact on shaping fashion trends and teenagers nowadays really rely on it. Social media's rise has had a big impact on fashion trends by giving style influencers a platform to show off their looks and engage with a wider audience (Scriptology, 2023). With style influencers taking the centre stage on social media, their looks and opinions have the power to engage a wider audience and shape fashion trends. As demonstrated by Table B1, most respondents agreed that they always follow the fashion trends and body image ideals promoted on social media, also proving its significance in increasing their awareness of current fashion trends (Table E1). As such, it is imperative to recognize the influence of social media and its impact on fashion trends and body image ideals, particularly among teenagers.

It's no surprise that social media has become a go-to resource for teenagers seeking inspiration for their fashion and beauty choices. With the rise of fashion bloggers and influencers on popular platforms like Instagram and RED (Xiao Hong Shu), young people have found a new outlet to showcase their personal style choices and explore new trends. As indicated by Table A12, over 50% of respondents use RED to explore body image ideals and fashion trends, while 40.7% use Instagram for this purpose. RED is a rapidly emerging social media platform that combines the most appealing features of Instagram and Pinterest and it also serves as an all-in-one destination for users to explore, evaluate, and buy products. The platform features a diverse range of content that covers various niches, including beauty, fashion, and entertainment. With a vast and enthusiastic user base, the platform offers excellent

opportunities for brands to reach out to potential customers (Haslam, 2024). By following their favourite fashion icons and discovering new styles, teenagers are able to stay up to date on the latest trends and get creative with their fashion choices. The large amount of fashion information available here makes it simple to discover classic pieces and helps bring back popular styles from the early 2000s, demonstrating social media's power in the fashion industry (Priedel, 2022). Table B4 further illustrates the power of social media in the fashion industry, with over 80% of respondents agreeing that these platforms help them find inspiration for their personal style. By simply searching for keywords like "Y2K," "Camping Vibe," or "Korean OOTD," etc, teenagers can easily access a wealth of information and inspiration to help them curate their own unique looks. According to the cultivation theory, media exposure can influence people's attitudes and behaviours. In this case, teens deliberately seek out to imitate the tastes and styles of influencers because of their visibility on social media platforms.

Social media has revolutionized the way teenagers approach fashion and beauty. By allowing them to digitally collect their favourite looks and style ideas, social media has replaced more antiquated techniques like clipping magazine pages. With its vast amount of fashion information and powerful influence over popular styles, social media has become an indispensable tool for young people seeking to express themselves through their fashion choices. It's worth noting that younger people are becoming more conscious of developing their own personal style, reflecting their individuality as new trends arise and celebrity-driven fashions gain hold (GreenSuggest, 2023). Moreover, trends in fashion provide a platform for people to express themselves and their preferred looks. Clothing is a means of expressing oneself, reflecting a person's personality, interests, and values (Scriptology, 2023). Therefore, it's not surprising that more than half of respondents in Table B3 use social media as a platform for expressing their own fashion style and body image ideals.

According to Beer (2018), social media is used by 54% of users to investigate items, and 71% of users are more likely to buy goods and services after seeing recommendations on social media. The results in Table B5 indicate that social media has an impact not only on fashion choices but also on clothing purchases and lifestyle decisions. In today's era, if someone is looking for inspiration or want to keep up with the latest trends, social media can be their go-to platform. Table E2 also reveal that people who gain inspiration from social media have influenced their real-life choices, such as clothing purchases or lifestyle decisions. On the other hand, Table B6 shows that most of the respondents are neutral about the influence of social media influencers or celebrities. Although influencers can be a helpful source of inspiration, it's essential to be cautious and mindful of their recommendations. As the results

shows in Table E3 found that even they constantly gain inspiration of fashion on social media, but they also have their own judgement criteria, they won't simply buy a product because of the influencers they following.

In today's fast-paced fashion industry, companies are constantly churning out new designs every week, leaving customers with an overwhelming number of choices. Unfortunately, this has led to a culture of discarding or donating previous clothing in order to make room for the latest trends. As highlighted by Reed (2021), this practice of rapid fashion can cause undue stress, particularly among teenagers who feel the need to keep up with the latest styles. Influencer marketing also is one of the common marketing strategies that most of the fashion company used in this fast-paced fashion industry. The respondents in Table E4 have shown varying views on following fashion trends on social media. While most of them always keep up with the latest trends, some do not feel pressured to do so. It's possible that those who enjoy fashion are more inclined to keep up with the fast-paced industry, while others may feel pressured to do so due to the constant promotion of trends on social media.

To sum up, the impact of social media on the body image ideals and fashion perceptions of Malaysian teenagers cannot be ignored. With the widespread use of platforms like Instagram and RED, there has been a significant shift in how young individuals seek fashion inspiration and keep up with the latest trends. From following fashion influencers to exploring niche styles, social media offers a plethora of resources to shape one's personal fashion choices. However, it's important to remain discerning and mindful of the influence of influencer endorsements and the culture of rapid fashion. As the fashion industry evolves, it's critical to prioritize sustainability and individual expression over fleeting trends and excessive consumption. By fostering a more conscientious approach to fashion consumption and encouraging authenticity in personal style, we can navigate the complexities of social media influence while cultivating a more meaningful and responsible relationship with fashion.

Moving on to the second research objective, it aims to explore the perceptions of Malaysian teenagers regarding the authenticity and reality of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media platforms. According to Table A13, the majority of the respondents follow fashion influencers or celebrities on social media. However, as we all know, people tend to post only their best and 'perfect' photos on social media platforms, which may not reflect their real lifestyles. Nonetheless, the results from Table E5 show that most respondents believe that influencers provide an authentic representation of their lifestyle on social media, and they also admire the influencers' lifestyle and want to see more of it. According to AIContentfy (2023), an influencer's authenticity is determined by how well their

real personality, values, and views come through in their online presence. It is crucial because it helps build credibility and trust with the audience. When followers engage with an influencer's content and perceive them as a reliable source, it is a sign of authenticity. The author also suggested that providing relatable personal anecdotes, being upfront about sponsored content, and being honest about product experiences are all ways to show authenticity. Therefore, we can see that influencers nowadays put in a lot of effort into creating authentic content to establish a strong relationship with their followers. They are like friends sharing their lives with their audience, which helps create a sense of authenticity. Cultivation theory states that people's views of reality can be shaped over time by exposure to consistent messages. When it comes to social media and fashion influencers, audiences may internalise specific portrayals of body types and lifestyles as the standard if they are exposed to well chosen information on a regular basis. Consequently, the cultivation effect which holds that extended exposure to influencer content fosters a sense of authenticity is seen in the majority of respondents' belief that influencers accurately portray their lifestyle.

In today's fast-changing world of fashion, social media has become a critical platform to keep up with the latest styles. However, according to Table C5, it is evident that teenagers are sometimes misled by the fashion content on social media. This is because social media influencers often promote brands and products that are not always authentic or practical for everyday wear. On the other hand, the majority of respondents in Table C3 and C4 still believe that the fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media are authentic and achievable in real life. This perception of authenticity can be a double-edged sword. While social media can be a great source of inspiration, it is essential to approach it with a critical eye to avoid being misled by false advertising. So, it is crucial to understand that not everything on social media is practical or achievable in real life.

Thus, while most respondents believe that influencers provide an authentic representation of their lifestyle, it is essential to approach social media content with a critical eye. People must understand that not everything on social media is practical or achievable in real life. However, the efforts of influencers in creating authentic content that reflects their real personality, values, and views are commendable. Overall, it is crucial to strike a balance between being inspired by social media content and being misled by false advertising.

Third research objective is to examine the relationship between the presentation of fashion trends and body image ideals on social media platforms and its effect on the self-esteem and self-image of teenagers. In today's society, social media has become a popular platform for

teenagers to express themselves, but it can also have a negative impact on their body image and self-esteem. According to the findings in Table E6, it appears that individuals who spent 5-7 hours on social media were more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their current body image. Moreover, Table D2 indicates that many respondents feel that the body image standards portrayed on social media can negatively impact their self-esteem. This suggests that excessive use of social media could potentially have a negative impact on how users perceive their own body image. Additionally, research from Withington and Punch (2019) has shown that spending an excessive amount of time on social media are at a higher risk of displaying signs of depression and lower self-esteem.

In today's society, many young adults experience pressure to constantly purchase new items for various occasions in order to fit in with their peers and receive validation in the form of compliments. According to a survey conducted by a British children's charity, there has been an increase in materialism among children compared to previous generations (Reed, 2021). Many young people today feel anxious about not possessing the latest clothing lines and high-tech gadgets. Given these trends, it's not surprising that Table E7 indicates that respondents who feel pressure to conform to certain body image standards based on what they see on social media are also likely to compare themselves to those images and may feel motivated to make changes to improve their appearance.

Unfortunately, the problem doesn't end there. My study findings in Table D6 indicate that many teenagers tend to seek validation on social media due to dissatisfaction with their body image. This behaviour can lead to a fear of expressing their true selves online and a tendency to spend a lot of time editing their posts, as shown in Table E8. The use of photo editing applications such as “MeiTuXiuXiu” has become increasingly popular among teenagers who feel the pressure to present themselves in a certain way on social media. While these applications can be helpful in enhancing images, they can also contribute to unrealistic beauty standards that can harm teenagers' self-esteem. A study conducted by Harshit and Sudha (2021) found that photo editing before posting is a common practice among social media users, with the most frequently used features being those that hide skin lesions such as acne or acne scars, pigmentation, and dark circles. Sometimes, some users go to great lengths to alter their appearance, including using filters to change their skin tone or even altering their facial features. The problem with these practices is that they can create a distorted view of reality, leading teenagers to believe that they must meet these unrealistic beauty standards in order to be accepted and validated on social media. This can be particularly damaging to those who are

already struggling with body image issues and can reinforce negative beliefs about their appearance.

Moreover, unrealistic standards are fostered in part by the way that fashion trends and body image ideals are portrayed on social media, which is frequently typified by carefully chosen and aspirational content. Teenagers run the risk of internalising these expectations and feeling unhappy with their own body image because they are constantly exposed to photos of models with perfect bodies and glamorous lifestyles. Research shows a link between excessive social media use and negative body image as well as pressure to meet arbitrary norms, which lends credence to this. Furthermore, the cultivation theory can also explain the phenomena of using social media platforms to seek praise and affirmation. Teens may experience pressure to live up to these ideals as they compare themselves to the idealised pictures, they see online in an effort to win the approval and affirmation of their peers. This may result in actions like photo-editing to present an idealised vision of oneself online and requesting affirmation from others through likes and comments.

5.2 Limitation and Suggestions

The research primarily focused on Chinese respondents and their use of social media, which may not be representative of other cultures or ethnicities. This can limit the generalizability of the findings and may not provide a complete picture of how social media affects individuals from different backgrounds. Moreover, the study relied on self-reported data which has its limitations. Participants may not always provide accurate responses, especially when it comes to sensitive topics such as body image and social media use. Self-reported data can also be influenced by social desirability bias, where participants provide responses, they believe to be socially acceptable rather than their true thoughts or behaviours. Therefore, the results may not always reflect the real attitudes and actions of individuals. Finally, while self-reported data is a useful tool for gathering information, it does not provide a complete picture of the nuanced ways in which social media impacts individuals' self-esteem and body image ideals. Objective measurements or observation of real online behaviours can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between social media and body image. Therefore, it might be more beneficial to conduct a qualitative study that includes objective measurements or observation of real online behaviours to better capture the true effects of social media on individuals.

5.3 Conclusion

The impact of social media on the views and actions of Malaysian teenagers regarding body image standards and fashion trends cannot be denied. A detailed analysis of this phenomenon reveals the complex interaction between fashion culture, social media, and teenage self-esteem. The study reveals those social media platforms such as Instagram and RED play a crucial role in shaping the fashion environment for Malaysian teenagers. The majority of respondents rely heavily on social media to explore and adopt body image ideals and fashion trends, indicating the significant impact these platforms have on young individuals' style choices and self-expression. While teenagers consider influencers' portrayal of lifestyle and fashion trends on social media as authentic, it is essential to approach such content with a critical eye. Despite attempts by influencers to create genuine and relatable content, there remains a risk of being misled by unrealistic standards and false advertising. Therefore, promoting media literacy and encouraging a discerning approach to social media consumption is crucial to mitigate the negative effects of idealized representations. The study also highlights the detrimental impact of social media on adolescent self-esteem and body image. Excessive exposure to idealized images and pressures to conform to unrealistic beauty standards can lead to dissatisfaction with one's body image and may even result in harmful behaviours such as seeking validation through social media and extensive photo editing. Social media platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for self-expression and inspiration, but they also present significant challenges, especially for impressionable teenagers. To move forward, it is essential for stakeholders, including parents, educators, and policymakers, to collaborate in promoting media literacy, prioritizing mental well-being, and promoting authentic representation. By cultivating a more mindful and responsible approach to social media usage, we can empower Malaysian teenagers to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, authenticity, and resilience.

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Appendix

A. Survey Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
2. Which age range you are from?
 - 18-22 years old
 - 23-27 years old
 - 28-32 years old
3. Ethnicity
 - Malay
 - Chinese
 - Indian
 - Others
4. Occupation
 - Employed
 - Self-employed
 - Unemployed
 - Student
5. What is your current Academic level?
 - Foundation/A-level/O-level/STPM
 - Diploma
 - Degree
 - Master
 - PhD
6. Do you used Social Media Platform?
 - Yes
 - No
7. How often do you use social media?
 - Always
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Occasionally
8. How much time do you spent on social media per day?
 - 1 hour and below
 - 2-4 hour

- 5-7 hour
- 8 hour and above

9. What are the purposes of using social media?

- Share your life
- Look for other users' reviews or tips
- Buy products
- Spend your free time
- Other

10. Do you use Social Media Platform for exploring body image ideals and fashion trends?

- Yes
- No

11. Which social media platforms do you use most often for exploring body image ideals and fashion trends?

- Instagram
- Facebook
- TikTok
- RED (Xiao Hong Shu)
- X (Twitter)
- Pinterest

12. Do you follow any fashion influencers or celebrities on social media?

- Yes
- No

Section B: Investigating teenagers' dependency on social media for body image ideals and fashion trends.

Instructions:

Below you will read through a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you. The following rating scale to make your choices where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. I always follow the fashion trends and body image ideals promoted on social media.					
2. Social media help me to increase the					

awareness of fashion trends.					
3. I use social media as a platform for expressing my own fashion style and body image ideals.					
4. Social media platforms help me to get inspiration for my own fashion choices.					
5. The perceptions of body image and fashion trends I've gained from social media influenced my real-life choices, such as clothing purchases or lifestyle decisions.					
6. I will buy the fashion and body related products, because it was promoted by an influencer or celebrity					
7. I feel pressured to keep up with the latest fashion trends.					

Section C: Explore perceptions regarding authenticity and reality on social media.

Instructions:

Below you will read through a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you. The following rating scale to make your choices where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. I agree that influencers provide an authentic representation of their lifestyle on social media.					
2. I admire the influencer's lifestyle and want to see more of it.					
3. I believe that the fashion trends portrayed on social media are authentic and achievable in real life.					
4. I believe that the body image ideals portrayed on social media are realistic.					
5. I experienced misled by fashion content on social media					

Section D: The influence of fashion trends and body image ideals portrayed on social media on teenage self-esteem and self-image.

Instructions:

Below you will read through a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you. The following rating scale to make your choices where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social media has left me feeling dissatisfied with my current body image after scrolling through social					

media.					
2. The body image standards on social media impact my self-esteem.					
3. I feel a sense of peer pressure to conform to certain body image standards based on what I see on social media.					
4. I often compare my own body to images or representations of bodies in the social media.					
5. It's hard for me to expressing my true self on social media.					
6. When feeling dissatisfied with my body image, I tend to seek validation or support on social media.					
7. I spent a lot of time to edit my photos before posting on social media platforms.					

Faculty of Creative Industries

Research Project Evaluation Form

Supervisor / Reviewer: _____ Iza Sharina Binti Sallehuddin _____

Student's Name : _____ Lim Ming Xian _____

Student ID : _____ 2001537 _____

Programme : _____ Bachelors of Communication (HONS) Broadcasting _____

Research Project Title: **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BODY IMAGE IDEALS AND
FASHION TRENDS AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUTH**

Instruction:

Please score each descriptor based on the scale provided below:

(1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good and 5 = very good)

Abstract (5%)	Score	Convert
1. Adequately describes the entire project		
2. States clearly the research problem		
3. Describe briefly and clearly the approach/methodology of the study		
4. Highlights the outcomes/significance of the study		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum / 4)		

Remark:

Introduction (10%)	Score	Convert
1. Fitting introduction to the subject of the study		
2. Concepts/definitions well explained		
3. Scope of study well described		
4. Statement of the research problem/research questions		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum / 2)		

Remark:		
Literature Review (15%)	Score	Convert
1. Latest research/work done in the area of study		
2. Explication of theories used		
3. Constructive discussion on publications in relation to the topic of study		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum *1)		

Remark:		
Methodology (10%)	Score	Convert
1. Research method explained clearly(inclusive of clear explanation of sampling techniques used, where applicable only)		
2. Appropriate research design/framework/questionnaire		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum * 1)		

Remark:		
Findings & Analysis (20%)	Score	Convert
1. Data analysis is appropriate		
2. Data analysis is detailed		
3. Pertinent use of diagrams/tables/graphs, correlated with content/Analysis supported by evidence		
4. Clear interpretation, well explained		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum * 1)		

Remark:		
Discussion & Conclusion (15%)	Score	Convert
1. Appropriate; related to the objective of the study		
2. Shortcomings of the study & recommendations for future study		
3. Conclusion is apt, clear		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum * 1)		

Remark:		
Language & Organization (15%)	Score	Convert
1. Correct use of English and technical language		
2. APA format is followed		
3. Comprehensiveness of content and presentation		
Sum		
Subtotal (sum * 1)		

Remark:		
Presentation (10%)	Score	Convert
1. Ability to answer questions from the panel (4 Marks)		
2. Presentation delivery is clear (4 Marks)		
3. Body language (2 Marks)		
Subtotal (sum * 1)		
Remark:		

	TOTAL	100%
Penalty: maximum 10 marks for late submission or poor attendance for consultation with supervisor		
	FINAL MARK	100%

****Overall Comments:**

Signature: _____

Date: _____