THE ROLE OF CREDIBLE SUPPLIERS AND PERCEIVED RISK IN MOTIVATING MALAYSIAN GEN-Z TO PURCHASE BLIND BOXES

CHUA LIAN QING

NGOI JUN HE

BACHELOR OF MARKETING (HONS)

UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

MAY 2025

THE ROLE OF CREDIBLE SUPPLIERS AND PERCEIVED RISK IN MOTIVATING MALAYSIAN GEN-Z TO PURCHASE BLIND BOXES

BY

CHUA LIAN QING

NGOI JUN HE

A final year project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

BACHELOR OF MARKETING (HONS)

UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

MAY 2025

Copyright Page

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman	FORM	REF NO. : FM-LIB-501
		REVISION NO. : 0
	UTAR Institutional Repository (UTAR-IR): Permission Form	EFFECTIVE DATE : 24/06/2024
		PAGE : 1

Title of Final Work : The Role of Credible Suppliers and Perceived Risk in Motivating Malaysian Gen-Z to Purchase Blind Box

Degree Awarded : Bachelor of Marketing (HONS)

Faculty : Faculty of Business and Finance

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have fully read and understood the Open Access (OA) Policy for Scholarly Output, and agree to abide by the terms and conditions outlined in the Policy.

I certify that the version of the document(s) that I deposited in UTAR-IR is the same as that approved by the examination committee, and hereby declare that I own the copyright to this work and it does not contain any unauthorised third party copyrighted materials.

I hereby grant to Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) permission to make available my thesis / project work open access in UTAR-IR, and to exercise the copyright in those materials. More specifically, I grant to UTAR a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide licence to exercise any and all rights under copyright relating to my thesis / project work, in any medium, and to authorise others to do the same. I shall retain copyright in my thesis / project work.

Alternative Access Option (if applicable):	
	Restricted Access. Reason(s): _____ _____
	Embargo for up to 24 months. Reason(s): _____ _____ Start Date: _____ End Date: _____ Total Duration: _____ months

Signature: _____

Name: Chua Lian Qing

ID: 22ABB01851

Signature: chongyl

Supervisor's Name: Chong Yee Lee

(APPENDIX I)

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman	FORM	REF NO. : FM-LIB-501
		REVISION NO. : 0
	UTAR Institutional Repository (UTAR-IR): Permission Form	EFFECTIVE DATE : 24/06/2024
		PAGE : 1

Title of Final Work : THE ROLE OF CREDIBLE SUPPLIERS AND PERCEIVED RISK IN MOTIVATING MALAYSIAN GEN-Z TO PURCHASE BLIND BOXES

Degree Awarded : Bachelor of Marketing (HONS)

Faculty : FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have fully read and understood the Open Access (OA) Policy for Scholarly Output, and agree to abide by the terms and conditions outlined in the Policy.

I certify that the version of the document(s) that I deposited in UTAR-IR is the same as that approved by the examination committee, and hereby declare that I own the copyright to this work and it does not contain any unauthorised third party copyrighted materials.

I hereby grant to Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) permission to make available my thesis / project work open access in UTAR-IR, and to exercise the copyright in those materials. More specifically, I grant to UTAR a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide licence to exercise any and all rights under copyright relating to my thesis / project work, in any medium, and to authorise others to do the same. I shall retain copyright in my thesis / project work.

Alternative Access Option (if applicable):	
	Restricted Access. Reason(s): _____ _____
	Embargo for up to 24 months. Reason(s): _____ _____ Start Date: _____ End Date: _____ Total Duration: _____ months

Signature: _____

Name: Ngoi Jun He

ID: 22ABB02481

Signature: chongyl

Supervisor's Name: Chong Yee Lee

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that:

(1) This undergraduate FYP is the end result of our own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the references to ALL sources of information be they printed, electronic, or personal.

(2) No portion of this FYP has been submitted in support of any application for any other degree or qualification of this or any other university, or other institutes of learning.

(3) Equal contribution has been made by each group member in completing the FYP.

(4) The word count of this research report is 10484 words.

Name of Student:	Student ID:	Signature:
1.Chua Lian Qing	22ABB01851	
2.Ngoi Jun He	22ABB02481	

Date : 7/5/2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express the special thanks of gratitude towards the beloved supervisor, Dr.Chong Yee Lee, for the valuable guidance and help. I am thankful to Dr. Chong for the supporting by sharing the experiences to me in completing the research.

I am also thankful to the family members as well as friends in which had providing me with the moral support as well as the encouragement.

Thank you.

DEDICATION

This research project is exclusively dedicated to my supervisor, Dr. Chong Yee Lee as well as my friends and family members. Thank you for the supporting, encouragement and opinions that being given to me so that I can complete this research on time.

PREFACE

The concept of blind boxes has emerged as a fascinating phenomenon in global consumer markets, captivating younger generations with its element of surprise and novelty. Originating in Japan and popularized by companies like Pop Mart in China, blind boxes have transformed traditional shopping into a gamified experience, blending excitement with the allure of collecting rare or exclusive items. Despite their global success, the adoption of blind boxes in Malaysia has been relatively slow, raising questions about the factors influencing consumer behavior in this unique market.

This research project seeks to explore the motivations and barriers behind Malaysian Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes, focusing on the credibility of suppliers—encompassing attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise—and the perceived risks associated with such purchases. By integrating the Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and examining the role of perceived risk, this study aims to provide actionable insights for marketers and policymakers to enhance the appeal and trustworthiness of blind box offerings in Malaysia.

The findings of this study not only contribute to academic literature by addressing gaps in the application of SCT to blind box marketing but also offer practical implications for businesses aiming to tap into the preferences of Gen-Z consumers. Through a combination of theoretical frameworks and empirical analysis, this research sheds light on the dynamics of consumer decision-making in an uncertain purchasing environment.

We extend our gratitude to all participants, academic advisors, and researchers whose contributions made this study possible. It is our hope that this work will inspire further exploration into the evolving landscape of consumer behavior and innovative marketing strategies.

ABSTRACT

The blind box market has gained significant popularity globally, particularly among younger consumers, by leveraging the elements of surprise and novelty. However, in Malaysia, this trend has not achieved the same level of engagement as in other regions. This study investigates the factors influencing Malaysian Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes, focusing on supplier credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) and perceived risk. Grounded in the Source Credibility Theory (SCT), the research integrates perceived risk as an additional variable to explore its impact on purchase intentions.

A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected from 367 Malaysian Gen-Z respondents aged 12 to 25 through a cross-sectional survey. The findings reveal that perceived risk and supplier expertise significantly influence purchase intentions, while attractiveness and trustworthiness do not exhibit a statistically significant impact. Specifically, reducing perceived risk traits, such as financial concerns and quality uncertainty, enhances the likelihood of purchase. Additionally, suppliers' expertise in providing accurate information and proactive problem-solving positively affects consumer confidence.

The study contributes to the literature by extending the SCT framework to the blind box context and highlighting the critical role of perceived risk in consumer decision-making. Practical implications suggest that marketers and policymakers should prioritize transparency, risk mitigation strategies, and supplier expertise to foster trust and encourage participation in the blind box market. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and gender imbalance in responses, which future research could address through longitudinal studies and broader demographic sampling.

Keyword: Purchase Intention; Blind Box; Attractiveness; Trustworthiness; Expertise

Subject Area: HF5410-5417.5 Marketing, Distribution of products

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLE

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Advertising Attitudes
AT	Attitude
ATT	Attractiveness
BA	Brand Attitudes
BI	Behavioral Intention
CG	Congruency
CI	Consumer Involvement
CL	Customer Loyalty
EN	Entertainment
EXP	Expertise
INF	Informativeness
IV	Independent Variable
KL	Kuala Lumpur
PF	Product Fit
PI	Promotional Incentives
PI	Purchase Intention
PR	Parasocial Relationship
PRI	Product Interest
RP	Reputation
SCT	Source Credibility Theory
SIM	Similarity
SN	Subjective Norm
TRU	Trustworthiness
UIS	Unverified Information Sharing

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The concept of blind boxes has become increasingly popular in recent years across various industries, including toys, collectibles, beauty products, and food items. A blind box is a type of product packaging that hides the item inside, providing consumers with surprise and excitement. When purchasing a blind box, consumers receive a package containing unknown products from a retailer, with only the brand name on the package providing a hint of its contents.

Pop Mart in China has been instrumental in popularising this innovative strategy by selling small toy figures in mystery packages (Mvondo et al., 2023). Major players in this market include Sonny Angel, Popmart, LEGO, Miniso, and others (Reports, 2024), who all leverage the element of surprise and the appeal of collecting rare or exclusive items to attract consumers.

Blind boxes originated in the 1980s in Japan, where bags were used instead of boxes and could be found in department stores like Matsuya. This early form of the blind box was called “fukubukuro” or “lucky bag”, and continues to be a successful business strategy (Tse, 2023). Unlike traditional shopping, where the buyer knows exactly what they are purchasing, blind boxes introduce a gamified element, tapping into the human desire for novelty and the potential to acquire rare or exclusive items. This gamification aspect makes purchasing blind boxes more exciting and compelling than traditional shopping (Zhang, 2021). As a result, the blind box model has proven to be a profitable strategy for businesses aiming to increase sales and customer engagement.

In China, the blind boxes are particularly famous, with the market size of the blind box industry expected to reach 25 billion yuan in 2025 (Zeng, 2021). Pop Mart, a leading blind box toy company, has consistently generated substantial profits since its establishment in China in 2010. It operates over 100 shops, over 1000 vending machines across China, and online channels (Chan, 2021). Figure 1.1 shows the official website of Pop Mart and the items it sells on its website.

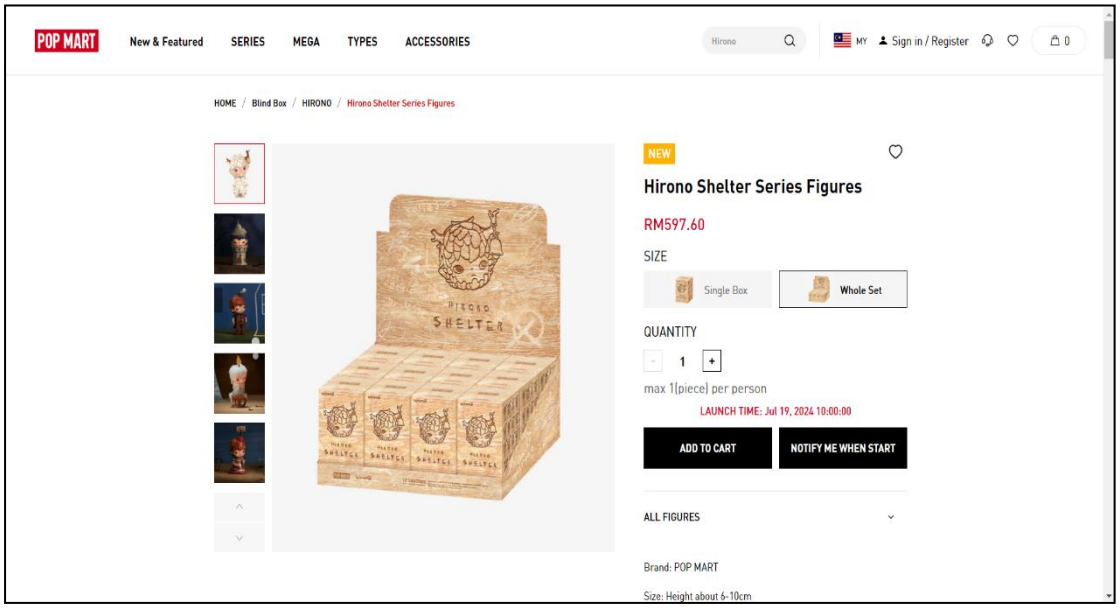

Figure 1.1: Pop Mart Official Website

The emotional and social value that blind boxes provide to younger customers may explain their popularity. Some buyers are drawn to the design, while others collect products authorised or produced by their favourite brands or celebrities. Additionally, some individuals first purchased blind boxes out of curiosity after seeing them trending online. Fans of Japanese anime are also willing to spend money on models of their favourite characters (Ai, 2024).

However, blind boxes are not as popular in Malaysia due to differences in consumer spending preferences. According to Figure 1.2, Malaysians tend to allocate a majority of their funds towards housing, water, electricity, and fuel, followed by food and

beverages, and transportation (Hassan, 2020), Additionally, the lack of promotions and limited store presence has hindered the popularity of blind boxes in Malaysia, with significantly fewer stores compared to China. Pop Mart physical stores located in Malaysia are shown in Figure 1.3.

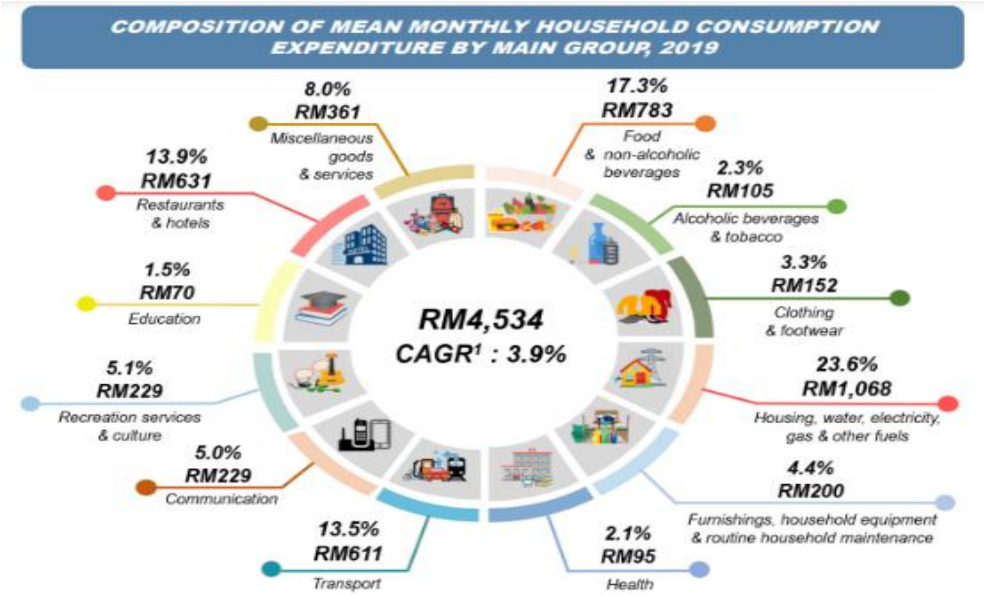

Figure 1.2: The monthly consumption of Malaysians in 2019

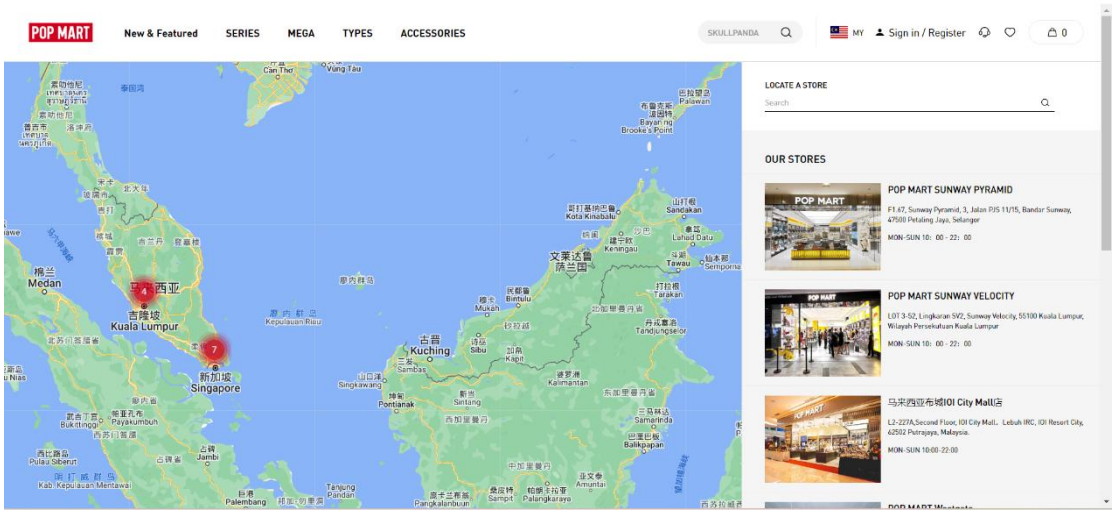

Figure 1.3: The Pop Mart Store that is located in Malaysia

Hence, it is essential to measure Malaysian consumers' intention to purchase blind boxes. Various factors, including the credibility of suppliers, influence the consumer's intention to buy blind boxes. If consumers trust the supplier, they are more willing to purchase its products, even if they are new. A previous study also indicated that brand trust significantly influences brand preference (Dam, 2020).

This study targets Malaysian Gen-Z because this generation is particularly drawn to novelty, excitement, and the thrill of uncertainty, which are key elements of blind box marketing strategy. Gen-Z consumers are more likely to engage with products that offer a unique experience, and surprise (or blind) boxes provide this through their unpredictable nature. More than 50% of Gen-Z believe that “spending money is to be happy” and experience immediate pleasure and joy in shopping (Zhang & Phakdeephirot, 2023). By purchasing a blind box, Gen-Z consumers will find joy, excitement, and more due to its uncertainty. Gen-Z's familiarity with digital platforms and their involvement in social media trends, such as unboxing videos, positions them as a key target for blind box marketing strategies.

1.2 Statements of Problem

The global blind box market, which features surprise items as part of a popular retail strategy, has succeeded considerably. Leading companies such as Sonny Angel, Popmart, and LEGO have effectively implemented this strategy across North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific regions. Whether you are a seasoned or novice collector of Pop Mart figurines, enthusiasts can now visit the brand’s first store in Malaysia, which opened in May 2023 on the fifth floor of Pavilion KL.

Since its establishment, the blind box market in Malaysia has not seen the same level of customer participation and enthusiasm as in other countries. Despite the global

success of blind boxes, Malaysian consumers have shown hesitancy, leading to reduced engagement and sales within this specialised market segment. Uncertainty associated with blind boxes probably impacts consumers' purchase intentions, resulting in low engagement with this product (Zhang & Zhang, 2022).

Malaysian customers complain and are dissatisfied with the marketing procedures and the quality of the product items offered in the surprise (or blind) boxes (Fu & Zhao, 2022). One of the most noticeable complaints is the lack of attractiveness in marketing and packaging strategies. Companies' marketing campaigns lack the qualities to spark potential consumers' interest in the blind boxes. Additionally, the visual appeal of the blind box packaging fails to grab customers' attention and interest in learning more about the products or services hidden inside. Moreover, the emotional appeal is overlooked, as promotional materials fail to invoke positive emotions or nostalgia, resulting in consumers lacking an emotional connection and enthusiasm for the blind box products. These complaints have led the authors to generalise that the attractiveness of marketing strategies affects Gen-Z and Millennials' intention to purchase blind boxes.

The low participation rate in blind box purchases in the local Malaysian market can be attributed to a critical problem: the perceived lack of trustworthiness among suppliers. Customers often feel misled by exaggerated claims or unclear information on the contents of surprise (or blind) boxes shared by companies and on social networks. This highlights the importance of honesty in marketing. A previous study (Marks et al, 1988) found that consumers exposed to highly exaggerated advertisements had more significant shifts in attitude than those exposed to slightly exaggerated ones. Suppliers must be more consistent in fulfilling their customer commitments, as reliability is also an issue. Moreover, the company is seen as not transparent about buyers' options when the products in the blind boxes don't meet their expectations. Therefore, this project aims to examine how trustworthiness traits influence the purchasing intentions of Gen-Z regarding blind boxes.

Customers are questioning the blind box supplier in Malaysia due to concerns about potential scams (Thomas, 2024). Ambiguous advertisements can generate curiosity and attract attention. However, customers worry that the products inside the blind boxes may not be worth the purchase because of a lack of accurate information about them. This contrasts with the information gap theory, which suggests that the unknown elements of a product can create a desire for more details (Daume & Hüttl-Maack, 2019; Loewenstein, 1994). The authors of this study are examining how the supplier's expertise affects customers' purchase behaviour in Malaysia's market.

Perceived risk is a negative factor that reduces the intention to purchase the Malaysian blind box. A past study (Faraji-Rad et al., 2017) found that priming uncertainty (vs. certainty) consistently increases the effects of various emotional influences on consumers' judgments and decisions. Uncertainty arises when potential buyers fear that the goods or services in the blind box may fail to meet their expectations, needs, or pleasure. When customers feel that the blind box products could significantly differ from their expectations regarding quality or performance, the perceived financial risk increases, leading to decreased customer satisfaction. Similarly, perceived risk is being examined in this project, and its effect on respondents' intentional purchase is also evaluated.

This project tests the hypothetical relationship between the credibility attributes of the blind box supplier (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) and consumers' intention to purchase blind boxes. The source credibility theory (SCT) model is used for this purpose. Additionally, the SCT theoretical framework is modified to test the direct effect of another determinant variable: perceived risk.

1.3 Research Questions

The problems discussed in the previous sub-chapter help the project authors derive the following research questions.

i. How do the credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of blind box suppliers affect Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes?

ii. How does perceived risk influence Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes?

1.4 Research Objectives

The project‘s purpose is to examine how the credibility of the blind box suppliers and perceived risk influence Gen-Z’s purchasing intention. Specifically, this study intends…

i. To examine the direct effect of the credibility of blind box suppliers (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) on Gen-Z's purchase intention.

ii. To examine the direct effect of perceived risk associated with blind boxes on Gen-Z's purchase intention.

1.5 Research Significance

This study addresses gaps in current policies by the Malaysian government and suppliers. Presently, there is limited emphasis on ensuring supplier credibility and managing perceived risk, factors crucial for Gen-Z consumers. Existing policies often overlook the need for transparency and accountability in the blind box market, potentially leading to consumer distrust. This study provides insights to refine

marketing policies, emphasising the importance of credible suppliers and clear risk communication to better align with Gen-Z expectations and improve market strategies.

1.5.1 Significance for Policy Planning

A blind box supplier must be credible. A credible supplier can prevent product recalls or legal issues that could harm your business reputation. When suppliers are not open and honest about their products, customers become more cautious and dissatisfied, which reduces their willingness to participate in the blind box market. Local suppliers must prioritise honesty, dependability, integrity, and transparency to support and advance blind boxes. Unfortunately, their current shortcomings in these areas are discouraging potential customers.

Quality concerns also play a significant role, as customers worry about defects, deficiencies, or major differences from the expected performance or appearance of the products. Incomplete or missing information about the contents of the blind box can lead to uncertainty about customer satisfaction, leaving customers feeling disappointed and unsatisfied after making a purchase. To address these issues, various policies can be implemented. For instance, government policies that mandate transparency in product disclosures are crucial. In the United States, Consumer Protection Law protects consumers from fraudulent business practices, defective products, and dangerous goods and services. It prevents dangerous or unethical business practices, such as false advertising or faulty products (Liberto, 2024). These policies aim to reduce the perceived risk associated with blind box purchases by making the process more transparent.

Uncertainty raises expectations and curiosity but also creates the potential for disappointment if blind box products or services fail to meet customers' expectations

(Wilson et al., 2005). Financial risks are directly linked to this uncertainty since consumers fear losing money on things that are worthless or unsatisfactory in the end. Customers are discouraged from entering the blind box market due to these perceived risks. Therefore, it is important for suppliers to effectively address and resolve these issues to increase customer confidence and participation in the local blind box market. To counter the uncertainty associated with blind box purchases, some governments and companies have implemented policies that allow customers to return unsatisfactory products. For example, like China's Regulatory Guidelines, merchandisers should publicise information about the value of the blind boxes' contents, the rules for drawing these boxes, and the probabilities of the outcomes (Xinhua, 2023). These policies aim to protect consumers by reducing the risk of purchasing blind boxes and ensuring they receive value for their money. These efforts are designed to increase consumer confidence and trust in the blind box market by addressing the uncertainties inherent in the product.

1.5.2 Significance for Literature

The Uncertainty Resolution Theory explains that humans are born with an inherent desire to solve uncertainty (Hsee & Ruan, 2016). Consumers experience psychological rewards when they can resolve uncertainty, even if the outcome is negative (Shen et al., 2019). Incorporating the perspective of Uncertainty Resolution Theory, which posits that humans have an inherent desire to resolve uncertainty and derive psychological rewards from doing so (Hsee & Ruan, 2016; Shen et al., 2019), enriches both Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and blind box literature.

This argument addresses notable gaps in existing research. Specifically, while SCT has been adapted to various fields like influencer marketing and live stream shopping, it has not been extensively applied to the context of blind boxes. By integrating SCT with the dimensions of source credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise) and considering the role of uncertainty resolution, this study provides a nuanced

understanding of how these factors influence consumer intentions in blind box purchases.

Additionally, while perceived risk has been studied in domains such as e-banking and robotic services, its impact on blind box purchases remains underexplored. This research fills this gap by examining perceived risk, such as the potential for receiving undesirable items. By addressing these gaps, the study enhances our understanding of consumer decision-making processes in high-uncertainty contexts and offers valuable insights for academic research and marketing practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 The Theoretical Framework of Source Credibility Theory

The source credibility theory (SCT) originated from communication and psychology and provides a valuable framework for understanding how consumers perceive and are influenced by the information they receive about products. It seeks to comprehend which characteristics of sources make them credible to individuals and how such perceived credibility affects communication outcomes (Von Hohenberg & Guess, 2022).

The SCT explains that credible sources tend to create a desired impact on the audience than non-credible sources (Umeogu, 2012). The theory posits that the effectiveness of a message is largely dependent on the perceived credibility of its source, which is determined by three dimensions of source credibility: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise (Ohanian, 1991).

Attractiveness encompasses the source's likability and appeal, which can include both physical attractiveness and personality traits. Physical attractiveness is an important cue in an individual's initial judgment of another person (Mills & Aronson, 1965; Baker & Churchill, 1977; Kahle & Homer, 1985). In blind box marketing, charismatic and relatable suppliers can significantly impact consumer perceptions and intentions.

Trustworthiness denotes the source's perceived honesty, integrity, and reliability (Ohanian, 1991). It refers to the consumer's confidence in the source for providing objectively and honestly (Ohanian, 1991). The trustworthiness of the supplier in

delivering high-quality products and services is an essential dimension in evaluating supplier performance.

Expertise is the extent to which a communicator is perceived as a source of valid assertions (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953). It refers to the communicator's knowledge, skills, and experience to support their assertions about the products or services sold. Exposure to an expert source exhibited more agreement with the advocated position than exposure to a low-expertise source (Ohanian, 1991).

A credible supplier can consistently provide high-quality products or services that meet buyers' requirements and reduce the chances of receiving substandard products. In addition, a supplier with accountability will take responsibility for any product quality issues and work towards addressing the problem quickly. In brief, the credibility of blind box suppliers helps their potential consumers take the blind boxes offer seriously and will convince the consumers to buy blind boxes.

2.1 The Source Credibility Theory's Past Conceptual Model

The existing research on source credibility has mainly focused on evaluating the credibility of the following sources: influencers and endorsers (Bogoevska-Gavrilova & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2022; Chan et al., 2021; Filieri et al., 2022; Trivedi & Same, 2019), parasocial relationships (Fatima & Billah, 2023), and social media postings (Serman & Sims, 2022) (see Table 2.1). However, there is a lack of published articles in Clarivate and Scopus journals that examine the credibility of blind box suppliers.

Past research on Source Credibility Theory (SCT) has consistently focused on three core variables: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as the foundational

dimensions of source credibility. Compared to other SCT studies, only two SCT variables, trustworthiness and expertise, were tested in Serman and Sims (2022) and Wong et al.'s (2019) studies. The key similarity across past research is the emphasis on how the credibility variables influence respondents' behavioural intentions (see Table 2.1).

Along with the SCT variables, some additional variables, such as entertainment, informativeness, similarity, reputation, customer loyalty, promotional incentives, product fit, and congruency, were examined as predictors of intentional behaviours. However, there is a lack of research on testing the combination of SCT variables with the perceived risk as an independent variable (IV) in Clarivate and Scopus journals (see Table 2.1).

Focusing on blind box suppliers' credibility in a previously unexplored context, this project addresses a gap in the literature. This study advances the SCT framework by integrating perceived risk as an IV alongside the traditional credibility dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise). While past research has generalised findings across broad populations, this study tailors the SCT model to a more specific, influential consumer segment: Malaysian Gen-Z consumers. This enhances the framework's applicability to a key demographic in digital commerce. Including perceived risk aligns with real-world consumer behaviour and provides marketers with actionable insights for credibility-building strategies in uncertain purchase environments.

Table 2.1: The Source Credibility Theory's Past Conceptual Model

Source (Year)	Source credibility			Additional independent variables								Mediators						Moderator	Dependent variable			Study context
	Att	Tru	Exp	En	Inf	Sim	Rp	Cl	Pi	Pf	Cg	Pr	Sn	At	Uis	Ba	Aa	Ci	Pi	Pri	Bi	
Chan et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓														✓			Live-stream shopping
Bogoevska-Gavrilova & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2022)	✓	✓	✓			✓													✓			Influencer marketing
Fatima & Billah (2023)	✓	✓	✓			✓						✓								✓		Parasocial relationship with product interest

Wong et al. (2019)		✓	✓			✓						✓	✓							✓	Intentions to take advice from others
Serman & Sims (2022)		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓						✓					✓	SME hospitality blog post
Filieri et al. (2022)	✓	✓	✓													✓			✓		Influencer's word of mouth
Trivedi & Same (2019)	✓	✓	✓													✓	✓	✓			✓	Celebrity endorsement
Seiler & Kucza (2017)	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓					✓	✓		✓		✓	Advertising & brand communication

Continue next page

Note:

Source credibility variables:

Att: Attractiveness	Tru: Trustworthiness	Exp: Expertise

Additional independent variables:

En: Entertainment	Inf: Informativeness	Sim: Similarity	Rp: Reputation
Cl: Customer Loyalty	Pi: Promotional Incentives	Pf: Product Fit	Cg: Congruency

Mediators:

Pr: Parasocial Relationship	Sn: Subjective Norm	At: Attitude	Uis: Unverified Information Sharing
Ba: Brand Attitudes	Aa: Advertising Attitudes		

Moderator:

CI: Consumer Involvement

Dependent variable:

Pi: Purchase Intention Pri: Product Interest Bi: Behavioural Intention

2.2 Blind Boxes Studies

The increasing popularity of blind boxes, where consumers purchase products without knowing their exact contents, has revolutionised consumer markets by introducing an element of surprise and excitement. The following are samples of IVs or intervening variables (that include mediator and moderator) have been tested in blind box studies; Social Value (Zhang & Zhang, 2022, Zhang, 2023), Perceived Quality (Fan & Wang, 2023, Guanhua, 2023), and Perceived Scarcity (Xia et al., 2025).

Despite their widespread appeal, the underlying factors driving consumer intentions to participate in blind box purchases remain poorly understood. Moreover, businesses continue to invest heavily in blind box marketing strategies without a clear understanding of how these strategies influence consumer behaviour.

In marketing, source credibility dimensions—comprising attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of the information source—plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. Unfortunately, the role of source or blind box suppliers' credibility in influencing consumer behaviour toward these purchases has not been adequately explored. This lack of insight can lead to inefficient marketing expenditures and missed opportunities to engage potential customers effectively. Thus, it is imperative to examine how the source credibility dimensions affect consumer intentions to participate in blind box purchases.

2.3 Perceived Risks Studies

In the realm of perceived risks, past research has explored this variable across various fields to understand its impact on consumer behaviour and decision-making. For instance, perceived risk has been extensively studied in e-banking, where concerns about security and privacy influence users' trust and their intention to engage in online financial transactions (Hernandez & Mazzon, 2007; Pavlou, 2003). Similarly, in the context of robotic services, perceived risk often revolves around the reliability and safety of robots, impacting users' acceptance and usage intentions (Shin, 2019). Educational technology also examines perceived risk, focusing on factors such as data privacy and the effectiveness of educational tools (Liu et al., 2020).

In past studies, perceived risk has often been incorporated as an additional variable within established theoretical frameworks. For example, in the Technology Acceptance Model studies, perceived risk has been linked to perceived ease-of-use and perceived usefulness, influencing users' intention to adopt new technologies (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behaviour studies incorporated the examination of perceived risk to understand its effect on intentional and actual behavioural change (Ajzen, 1991). These studies highlight that perceived risk is critical in determining users' willingness to engage with new technologies and services.

Perceived risk has been shown to significantly impact various dependent variables such as intention to use a product or service and overall satisfaction. In e-commerce, for example, perceived risk has been demonstrated to affect consumers' purchase intentions and post-purchase satisfaction (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; Kim et al.,

2008). In robotic services, perceived risk influences users' acceptance and their perceived satisfaction with the service (Shin, 2019).

In the context of blind boxes, perceived risk is highly relevant due to the uncertainty and potential for disappointment associated with the product. Consumers risk receiving items that do not meet their expectations or are perceived as having low value. This perceived risk can deter potential customers from participating in the blind box market. Thus, understanding how perceived risk affects consumer behaviour in this specific area is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate these concerns and enhance customer confidence.

2.4 The Development of the Current Hypotheses

2.4.1 The Attractiveness of Suppliers and Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

The hypothetical positive relationship between suppliers' attractiveness and respondents' intentions has been well-documented in various research contexts. For instance, Zhang and Zhang (2022) found that the perceived value of blind boxes, influenced by the suppliers' attractiveness, significantly impacts purchase intentions among young consumers in China. Similarly, Wang and Zhou (2021) highlighted that the novelty and excitement provided by attractive suppliers play a crucial role in driving purchase intentions in the e-commerce sector.

However, not all studies align with this view. For example, Nguyen et al.'s (2024) study results show that the relationship between the attractiveness of TikTok influencers and Gen-Z's purchase intentions in the cosmetic industry is not

supported. This discrepancy could be due to the different nature of products and consumer expectations, where factors like product quality and brand reputation of cosmetic products overshadow influencer attractiveness. Although two SCT variables, trustworthiness and expertise, significantly impacted purchase intentions, the physical attractiveness of influencers did not have a notable effect (To, 2024). This suggests that Gen-Z may prioritise trustworthiness and expertise over attractiveness when making purchasing decisions, especially in contexts where product efficacy is crucial.

To encourage Malaysian Gen-Z to purchase blind boxes, this project predicts that suppliers' attractiveness is a significant predictor of purchasing intention. This is because Malaysian Gen-Z consumers are highly attuned with the following attractive traits-marketing appeal strategy, visual appeal, innovative design, and emotional appeal-when considering the purchasing decision. Therefore, despite some contradictory findings in other studies, the unique characteristics of the study's respondents and product category justify the testing of hypothesis H1.

H1: The suppliers' attractiveness and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.

2.4.2 The Trustworthiness of Suppliers and Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

Several studies support that suppliers' trustworthiness and consumer purchase intentions are positively related. For example, Pavlou and Fygenson (2006) assert that trust in e-commerce vendors had enhanced respondents' purchasing intention. Moreover, in the context of mobile commerce, Kim et al. (2011) suggest that supplier trustworthiness is crucial in influencing consumers' intention to engage in e-transactions, especially for high-involvement products. These findings suggest

that trust in the supplier is a critical determinant of purchase intentions, particularly among consumers concerned about the transaction's credibility and reliability.

However, some studies do not fully support this relationship. In their research on online marketplaces, Ba and Pavlou (2002) found that while trustworthiness is important, it does not always directly translate to purchase intention, particularly when other factors such as price or convenience are more pressing for the consumer. Additionally, Mukherjee and Nath (2007) found that in the context of B2B transactions, trustworthiness did not significantly influence purchase decisions, as these were more heavily based on contractual obligations and the specific benefits of the products. These findings suggest that the influence of trustworthiness on purchase intentions may vary depending on the product type and purchasing context, where other factors may override the effect of trust.

Considering Gen-Z's plans to buy blind boxes, we argue that the hypothesis is justified despite the conflicting findings. This group is usually quite picky and expects suppliers to act ethically, transparently, and dependably. Because blind boxes carry a certain amount of risk and uncertainty, the supplier's trustworthiness is very important. Gen-Z buyers are more inclined to buy from suppliers they believe to be reliable since they are recognised for being sceptical and for researching companies before making a purchase. This situation emphasises how crucial trustworthiness is in forming purchase intentions among Gen-Z, supporting our hypothesis.

H2: The suppliers' trustworthiness and Gen-Z’s intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.

2.4.3 The Expertise of Suppliers and Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

The positive relationship between the expertise of suppliers and Gen-Z's intentions to purchase blind boxes is supported by several studies. For instance, Liang et al. (2021) found that suppliers' expertise significantly affects thought and purchase intentions among consumers in the context of solar photovoltaic panels. When experts provide high-quality and trustworthy information, uncertainty reduces. This makes individuals more willing to accept the information and follow the expectations of others. Similarly, Lisichkova & Othman's (2017) expertise is one of the main criteria that affects the consumers' thoughts and purchase intention in the context of influencers.

However, not all studies support this hypothesis. For example, in the context of business-to-business (B2B), Belonax et al. (2007) asserted that supplier expertise and purchase intentions were not significantly related. The results indicate that supplier and salesperson expertise was not an important criterion for some buyers in minimally important purchases than in extremely important purchases. In the context of consumer electronics, Baker et al. (2002) also found that although supplier expertise was acknowledged, it was overshadowed by price competitiveness and product availability as the main factors influencing purchase decisions. This suggests that in markets where consumers have access to multiple options and can easily compare prices, the perceived expertise of suppliers may have a diminished impact on their purchase intentions.

This project argues that the hypothesis H3 is justified despite these contradictory results. Due to the inherent uncertainty and novelty of blind boxes, Gen-Z customers may depend more on the suppliers' purported experience level. In this situation, customers' purchase intentions may be influenced by supplier expertise, which can play a crucial role in reassuring them of the blind boxes' quality and authenticity. Furthermore, Gen-Z buyers are renowned for being quite picky and frequently value the reputation and area of expertise of suppliers when making judgments. This suggests that suppliers' expertise will likely be a major factor in

influencing purchase intentions in the context of blind boxes, which supports our hypothesis.

H3: The suppliers' expertise and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.

2.4.4 The Perceived Risks and Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

Several studies have supported the relationship between perceived risk and purchase intention. For example, Indiani et al. (2015) argue that when perceived risk declines to an acceptable level, respondents' hotel booking intention increases and turns into an actual purchase. Forsythe et al. (2006) also examined perceived risk in online shopping. They found that concerns about product performance and return policies were major deterrents for consumers, reinforcing the notion that perceived risk is a substantial barrier to consumer purchasing behaviour across various contexts.

However, the hypothetical relationship is not supported in some studies. For example, Dowling and Staelin (1994) argue that while perceived risks might initially deter purchase intentions, this effect can be mitigated by factors such as strong brand reputation or positive word-of-mouth. Additionally, Bhatnagar et al. (2000) further explored this relationship in online shopping and found that for certain products, perceived risks did not significantly deter purchases, especially when consumers perceived strong benefits or when trust in the supplier was high.

Despite the inconsistent result, the project's researchers predict that a reduction of perceived risk traits motivates Malaysian Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes (see H4). Although uncertainty (a perceived risk trait) enhances potential buyers'

excitement, surprise, and thrill of buying blind boxes, which coincides with blind box marketing strategy, blind boxes are not as popular in Malaysia as they are in overseas markets. Probably, other perceived risk traits, such as the possibility of losing money when the blind box product or service is not worth buying or discrepancy between expected and bought product's feature or quality, override the excitement, surprise, and thrill of buying blind boxes.

H4: The reduction of perceived risk and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.

Table 2.2 summarises the project's research questions, research objectives, and hypotheses.

Table 2.2: The Summary of the Relationship between the Study's Research Questions, Research Objectives, and Hypotheses

Research Questions	Research Objectives	Hypotheses
RQ1: How do the credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of blind box suppliers affect Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes?	RQ1: To examine the direct effect of the credibility of blind box suppliers (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) on Gen-Z's purchase intention.	H1: The suppliers' attractiveness and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related. H2: The suppliers' trustworthiness and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related. H3: The suppliers' expertise and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.
RQ2: How does perceived risk influence Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes?	RO2: To examine the direct effect of perceived risk associated with blind boxes on Gen-Z's purchase intention.	H4: The reduction of perceived risk and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.

2.5 Current Study's Research Model

The overview of SCT modelling, blind box, and perceived risk conceptual frameworks helps the project to develop the hypotheses for testing. Figure 2.1 depicts the current study's research model.

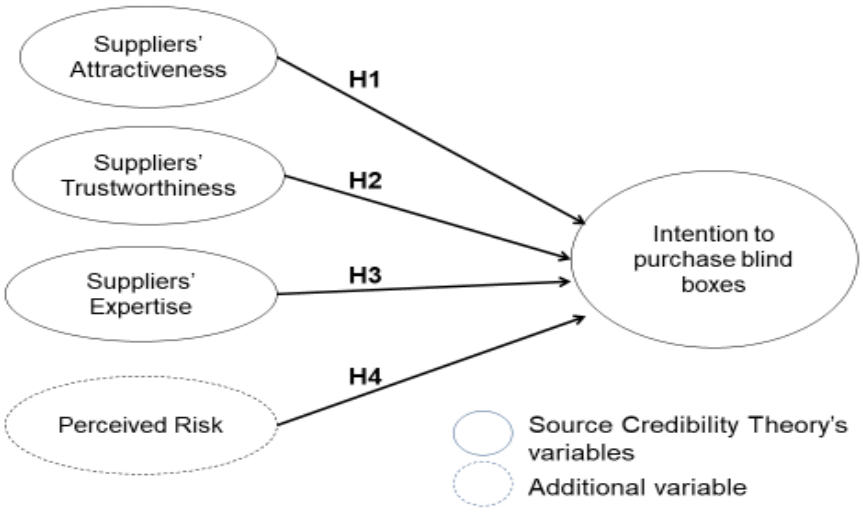

Figure 2.1: Current Study's Research Model

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This project uses a deductive approach to develop the hypotheses from the SCT theoretical framework and empirical perceived risk studies (Masud, 2024). Primary data was collected and analysed statistically to confirm the hypotheses. As this research aims to enrich the SCT theoretical framework and not develop a new research modelling, an inductive approach is not used.

This project collected cross-sectional data, where all variable data were measured simultaneously at a single point in time. Due to time constraints, it is not feasible for the project researchers to collect longitudinal data that aims to measure the same study variables from the same sample repeatedly (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, as the study's target respondents' behaviour and external factors (such as tariffs and public regulations about blind boxes) do not change drastically within a short time frame, findings from cross-sectional data can still represent their behaviour.

3.2 Sampling Design

This study uses sampling rather than a census because of practical factors, including cost, time, and feasibility. A census, which entails gathering information from every member of the target population, would be extremely difficult and resource-

intensive, particularly considering how big and dispersed Malaysia's Gen-Z population is. Collecting data from the target's representative using a systematic and careful sampling approach yields insightful results with far less resource usage. The following sub-sections discuss the project's sampling design approach.

3.2.1 Target Population

This project targets Malaysian Gen-Z, ages between 12 and 25 years old and who are knowledgeable about blind box marketing strategies and haven't purchased a blind box before. To filter out non-targeted respondents, screening questions related to the definition of the target population are shown in the project's questionnaires.

By 2020, Gen-Z emerged as the largest demographic group in Malaysia, constituting 29% of the population (Tjiptono et al., 2020). In 2023, Malaysia ranked third globally for e-commerce sales growth, driven by high internet penetration, user-friendly platforms, and a projected gross merchandise value (GMV) of around 16 billion USD by 2025 (Siddharta, 2024). As digital natives, Gen-Z consumers are highly engaged in online shopping, strongly prefer interactive and gamified retail experiences (Statista, 2024). Almost 40% of blind box consumers are Gen-Z in 2020, and their purchasing power is steadily rising (Fu & Zhao, 2022). As a result, blind box suppliers, such as Pop-Mart, use e-platforms, including their official websites and other e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Taobao, and Lazada, to market the blind boxes.

3.2.2 Sample Size

Statistics about the number of Gen-Z residing in Malaysia have not been made public by any organisation. Recent data from Kemp (2024) indicates that Malaysia's

total population reached 34.49 million as of January 2024. Based on demographic distribution trends, it is estimated that approximately 8.97 million Malaysians belong to the Gen-Z cohort. Given this sizable population, this study adopts the widely recognised sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which recommends an ideal sample size of 384 when the population is more than one million. This ensures statistically reliable findings while maintaining research feasibility.

Table 3.1: Morgan's Table for Sample Size

Population Size	Confidence = 95% Margin of Error				Confidence = 99% Margin of Error			
	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	19	20	20	20	19	20	20	20
30	28	29	29	30	29	29	30	30
50	44	47	48	50	47	48	49	50
75	63	69	72	74	67	71	73	75
100	80	89	94	99	87	93	96	99
150	108	126	137	148	122	135	142	149
200	132	160	177	196	154	174	186	198
250	152	190	215	244	182	211	229	246
300	169	217	251	291	207	246	270	295
400	196	265	318	384	250	309	348	391
500	217	306	377	475	285	365	421	485
600	234	340	432	565	315	416	490	579
700	248	370	481	653	341	462	554	672
800	260	396	526	739	363	503	615	763
1000	278	440	606	906	399	575	727	943
1200	291	474	674	1067	427	636	827	1119
1500	306	515	759	1297	460	712	959	1376
2000	322	563	869	1655	498	808	1141	1785
2500	333	597	952	1984	524	879	1288	2173
3500	346	641	1068	2565	558	977	1510	2890
5000	357	678	1176	3288	586	1066	1734	3842
7500	365	710	1275	4211	610	1147	1960	5165
10000	370	727	1332	4899	622	1193	2098	6239
25000	378	760	1448	6939	646	1285	2399	9972
50000	381	772	1491	8056	655	1318	2520	12455
75000	382	776	1506	8514	658	1330	2563	13583
100000	383	778	1513	8762	659	1336	2585	14227
250000	384	782	1527	9248	662	1347	2626	15555
500000	384	783	1532	9423	663	1350	2640	16055
1000000	384	783	1534	9512	663	1352	2647	16317
2500000	384	784	1536	9567	663	1353	2651	16478
10000000	384	784	1536	9594	663	1354	2653	16560
100000000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16584
300000000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16586

Source: Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

3.2.3 Sampling Method

Probability sampling cannot be used in this study as the sampling frame for Gen-Z residing in Malaysia is unavailable. Therefore, a non-probability sampling was used. First, judgmental sampling is used to select respondents who meet the target population definition. Then, this project employs the snowball sampling method to help researchers reach potential respondents who reside far away from the researchers' residential area. The project researchers first contacted family and

friends to participate in the survey. After that, the initial group of participating respondents was requested to circulate the questionnaires to their family, friends, and acquaintances. This process will continue until the total number of collected questionnaires matches the ideal sample size, 384.

3.3 Data Collection Method

To collect reliable and valid data from the main survey's respondents, a series of processes were carried out to ensure that the items of each variable measure the variable reflectively correctly and that the respondents understand what each item aims to measure. To complete the tasks, a pre-test and pilot study were carried out to develop the main survey's questionnaire.

3.3.1 Development of Questionnaire

The project's researchers prepared the first questionnaire draft by adopting items of each variable from selected sources. The adopted item statements were modified to match the current study context. To retain the meaning of the original item, an academic supervisor was invited for a pre-test. Once ethical clearance approval is obtained, the pilot study will be carried out. The following sub-sections discuss the pre-test and pilot study procedures.

a. Pre-Test

Pre-testing is crucial to ensure the item statements are well-crafted and logically arranged. Each statement should focus on a single subject, precisely measure what

is aimed to be measured, and avoid duplicating other item statements. The academic supervisors compared the original and modified item statements. The item statements were then further modified (see Table 3.2).

The second modified item statements were then submitted for ethical clearance committee vetting and approval. The committee members approved the revised questionnaire item statements. Subsequently, the project's researchers requested representatives of the targeted respondents to review the pre-tested item statements and give feedback for improvement. See the next sub-section for the details of a pilot study.

Table 3.2: Feedback from Pre-test Expert

Draft of variables' items adopted from selected sources
IV1: Attractiveness
To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should possess the following attractive traits that make the products or services appealing:
ATT1. Appealing Marketing.
~~Attractive and engaging~~ The marketing campaigns ~~can capture consumer interest and make the idea of blind box purchases more enticing~~. must have sufficient qualities or features to arouse potential consumers' interest in the blind box.
ATT2. Visual Appeal
The aesthetic design and packaging of blind boxes can draw consumer attention and create a positive first impression, increasing the likelihood of purchase. Maintain.
ATT3. Innovative Design
Displaying blind boxes ~~in a creative and unique way~~ creatively and uniquely could ~~catch~~ capture customers' interest and encourage them to learn more about the product or services hidden in the blind box.
ATT4. Emotional Appeal

~~Customers are more likely to participate in blind box purchases when they are exposed to marketing that~~ Arouse potential consumers' positive emotions or nostalgic (or wants to be back to experience a long-gone moment) feelings. ~~in them~~.

IV2: Trustworthiness

To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should possess the following trustworthiness traits:

Trust1. Honesty

~~Consumers are more likely to trust suppliers who are transparent and truthful about the contents and probabilities within blind boxes, reducing fears of being deceived.~~ Always tell the truth and do not try to deceive people or break the law.

Trust 2. Reliability

~~Reliable suppliers who consistently deliver quality products enhance consumer confidence, fostering a higher intention to purchase blind boxes~~. Someone who does what they promise.

Trust 3. Integrity

~~Suppliers who demonstrate ethical behaviour and prioritise consumer interests build stronger trust, making consumers more comfortable with the inherent uncertainty of blind boxes.~~ Someone with strong moral principles or business ethics prioritising consumer interests.

Trust4. Transparency

~~Clear communication~~ Someone who communicates clearly about the odds of receiving different items in

blind boxes ~~helps consumers feel informed and respected, increasing their likelihood of participation.~~ in an open way, without a secret.

~~5. Celebrity Influence~~

~~Celebrities with a reputation for honesty and integrity can enhance the perceived trustworthiness of the product. Their endorsement can signal that the product is reliable and worth purchasing~~. As the suppliers are only posting the blind box images online, do not use celebrity endorsers to promote the blind boxes, then item 5 can be removed.

IV3: Expertise

To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should possess the following expertise traits:

Exp1. Knowledgeable

~~Customers are reassured~~ Able to assure potential buyers about the intrinsic or core value of the blind box contents ~~by suppliers' extensive industrial expertise, which shows dependability and competence~~.

Exp2. Experienced

~~Suppliers' extensive~~ With experience ~~in the industry suggests reliability and competence, which reassures consumers about the value of the blind box contents.~~ in the blind box selling strategy, suppliers will implement the blind box processes correctly.

Exp3. Accurate Information

~~By giving customers~~ Able to provide accurate and thorough information about the contents of the blind box ~~uncertainties are reduced and participation is encouraged.~~ to reduce potential buyers' uncertainties feeling.

Exp4. Professional

~~When suppliers operate professionally, it shows trust and lowers perceived risks, which encourages customers to participate in blind box purchases~~. Able to identify and fix problems proactively before those problems affect a large portion of the order.

Perceived Risk

To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should be able to reduce the following perceived risk traits embedded by potential buyers.

PR1. Perceived uncertainty arises when potential buyers fear that the products or services in the blind box couldn't match their expectations, needs, or pleasure.

~~Consumers' perception of the risk associated with not knowing the exact contents of the blind box can deter participation unless mitigated by strong expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness attributes.~~

PR2. Financial risks refer to the possibility of losing money when the blind box product or service is not worth buying.

~~Consumers concerned about the potential financial loss if the blind box contents are unsatisfactory can influence consumer intention, with lower perceived risk increasing the likelihood of participation.~~

PR3. Quality concerns arise when potential buyers fear there will be a defect, deficiency, or a significant variation or notable difference in the bought product or service's expected appearance or performance.

~~Consumer worries about the quality of products within the blind box can affect their decisions. Suppliers with high credibility can reduce these concerns, promoting more customers for participation in blind box..~~

PR4. Satisfaction uncertainty arises when potential buyers have incomplete or missing information about the bought blind box and feel unsatisfied upon receiving products or services.

~~The fear of receiving items that do not meet expectations can impact consumer willingness to purchase. Suppliers who effectively communicate and demonstrate high credibility can reduce this perceived risk.~~

Source: Mvondo, Jing, & Hussain, (2023).

Purchase Intention

PI1. I intend to ~~participate in blind boxes endorsed by credibility suppliers~~. explore blind box offers in the future.

PI2. I ~~will have a positive relationship with those credibility blind box suppliers.~~ will encourage my social circle to explore the blind box concepts.

PI3. I ~~intend to participate in the blind box brand that has celebrity endorsers~~. may buy blind box in the future

Source: Ermec Sertoglu, Catli, & Korkmaz. (2014).

b. Pilot Study

A total of 25 participants were involved in the pilot study. Three participants' responses were ignored because one decided to withdraw before completing the pilot study session, and two were unfamiliar with the blind box marketing concept. Three group discussion sessions were arranged, and the participants were invited to join any session. During the session, they were provided the pre-tested item statements and were encouraged to discuss their understanding of what each item aims to measure. The statement will be modified if any participant raises a negative comment. At the end of each session, no suggestions were given to revise the pre-tested statements.

To ensure the item statements can measure each variable reliably, the participants were requested to answer the pre-tested item statements. The pilot study data were analysed using a reliability test. Table 3.3 shows the computed reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha scores for each variable. Overall, the coefficients are higher than the threshold value of 0.6 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The result denotes that the participants rated the item statements of each variable consistently or giving similar directional opinions (either agree or disagree). As the item statements can measure each variable reliably, the pre-tested item statements become finalised and were adopted to measure the main survey respondents' feedback about the credibility of blind box suppliers, perceived risk, and their intention to purchase blind boxes.

Table 3.3: Pilot Study Reliability Result

Variable's name	Cronbach's Alpha Score	Number of items
IV1: Suppliers' attractiveness	0.932	4
IV2: Suppliers' trustworthiness	0.872	4
IV3: Suppliers' expertise	0.902	4
IV4: Perceived risk	0.908	4
DV: Intention to purchase blind boxes	0.908	3

c. Questionnaire Design for Main Study

There are two sections in the finalised questionnaire. The first segment aims to gather the respondents' demographic data, including age, gender, income level, and educational level. The second section consists of the item statements for each IV and dependent variable (DV). Respondents were asked to rate their level of

agreement for each item statement using a 7-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1 (for strongly disagree) to 7 (for strongly agree). The Likert scale is widely used as a psychometric tool in educational and social sciences research, enabling the respondents to easily express their agreement or disagreement (Joshi et al., 2015). Compared to a 5-point Likert scale, the 7-point Likert scale allows for more detailed and precise agreement ratings (Russo et al., 2021).

The questionnaire item statements are finalised upon completing the pre-test and pilot study (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: The Finalised Questionnaire Item Statements

Variables and Item Statements	Modified from sources below
IV1: Attractiveness	
To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should possess the following attractive traits that make the products or services appealing:	
Att1: **Appealing Marketing.** The marketing campaigns must have sufficient qualities or features to arouse potential consumers' interest in the blind box.	Seiler & Kucza, 2017
Att2: **Visual appeal.** The aesthetic design and packaging of blind boxes can draw consumer attention and create a positive first impression, increasing the likelihood of purchase.	
Att3: **Innovative Design.** Displaying blind boxes creatively and uniquely could capture customers' interest and encourage them	

to learn more about the products or services hidden in the blind box.	
Att4: **Emotional Appeal.** Arouse potential consumers' positive emotions or nostalgic (or wants to be back to experience a long-gone moment) feelings.	

IV2: Trustworthiness

To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should possess the following trustworthiness traits:

Trust1: **Honest:** Always tell the truth and do not try to deceive people or break the law.	Kamphuis, 2017
Trust2: **Reliable:** Someone who does what they promise.	
Trust3: **Integrity:** Someone with strong moral principles or business ethics prioritises consumer interests.	
Trust4: **Transparency:** Someone who communicates clearly about the odds of receiving different items in blind boxes in an open way, without a secret.	

IV3: Expertise

To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should possess the following expertise traits:

Exp1: **Knowledgeable.** Able to assure potential buyers about the intrinsic or core value of the blind box contents.	Ismagilova et al., 2020
Exp2: **Experienced.** With experience in the blind box selling strategy, suppliers will implement the blind box processes correctly.	

Exp3: **Accurate Information.** Able to provide accurate and thorough information about the contents of the blind box to reduce potential buyers' feelings of uncertainty.

Exp4: **Professional**. Able to identify and fix problems proactively before those problems affect a large portion of the order.

IV4: Perceived Risk

To effectively endorse or promote a product or service, the blind box suppliers should be able to reduce the following perceived risk traits embedded by potential buyers:

PR1: **Perceived uncertainty** arises when potential buyers fear that the products or services in the blind box couldn't match their expectations, needs, or pleasure.

PR2: **Financial risks** refer to the possibility of losing money when the blind box product or service is not worth buying.

PR3: **Quality concerns** arise when potential buyers fear there will be a defect, deficiency, or a significant variation or notable difference in the bought product or service's expected appearance or performance.

PR4: **Satisfaction uncertainty** arises when potential buyers have incomplete or missing information about the bought blind box and feel unsatisfied upon receiving products or services.

Mvondo, Jing, & Hussain (2023).

DV: Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

PI1: I intend to explore blind box offers in the future.

PI2: I will encourage my social circle to explore the blind box concepts. PI3: I may buy a blind box in the future.	Ermec Sertoglu, Catli, & Korkmaz. (2014)

3.3.2 The Main Survey Fieldwork

The project employed a non-probability sampling method (or snowball sampling) due to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame for Gen-Z residents in Malaysia. Additionally, the project researchers can collect data from respondents located far away from the researcher's residential area.

In the digital era, Malaysians, especially Gen-Z, use smart devices for communication and learning purposes. Therefore, the main survey questionnaires were prepared using Google Forms with a QR code and URL address for distribution and collection purposes. E-surveys enable researchers to swiftly reach targeted respondents from anywhere and at any time through an internet connection. Additionally, it also offers convenience in garnering participation from respondents who are unfamiliar with the researchers.

In approaching the first respondents' batch, the project researchers collected data from students at high-traffic campus locations, such as the main canteens at Block C and Pavilion 2 during lunch hours, and the researchers' study faculty. Additionally, the researchers requested their Gen-Z family members, friends, and non-UTAR acquaintances to fill out the finalised questionnaire. The researchers explained the survey's purpose and ensured them that their data would be kept confidential and used only for academic research. After completing the questionnaire, the UTAR

cohort and personal networks were invited to circulate the e-questionnaire to their Gen-Z family members, friends, and acquaintances.

Upon receiving the e-survey link, respondents can answer the questionnaire at their own pace anytime and snap the QR code to submit the completed e-questionnaire. The project researchers show their contact details, such as email address, on the questionnaire. Respondents were welcome to communicate the researchers for any queries or comments.

In monitoring the snowball sampling progress, the researchers sent weekly reminders to our initial respondents, posted the questionnaire link on various social media platforms, and encouraged participants to remind their networks. The data collection process continued until the number of received answered questionnaires reached 384. All collected data was then systematically organised in Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel for comprehensive analysis. The data were collected from December 3, 2024, to March 20, 2025.

3.4 Data Analysis Tool

The researchers analysed the main survey data using descriptive and inferential statistics. The demographic data are descriptively analysed to inform readers with the frequency distribution of gender, age, nationality, race, occupation, and average income level. Such information allows researchers to check whether the respondents' demographic characteristics accurately reflect population parameters.

The inferential statistical results assist the researchers in confirming the project's hypotheses. The reliability coefficients, known as Cronbach's Alpha, were calculated to ensure the collected data is reliable for further statistical analyses. Indications of the ranges of reliability coefficient value are shown in Table 3.5 (Zahreen et al., 2018). It denotes the level of consistency when respondents rate their agreement and disagreement responses on each variable's item statement. When most respondents rated all items of a variable within the agreement or disagreement range, the coefficient score increases. If the reliability coefficient of a variable is below 0.70, a special investigation needs to be conducted to check which item has been rated by the same respondent at a different agreement or disagreement range as compared with other items. Possibly, this item should be coded using reverse code, or the scenario doesn't apply in the current study context. A possible solution is to remove the item.

Table 3.5: The Reliability Level Indications of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

	Coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
1.	More than 0.90	Excellent
2.	0.80 - 0.90	Good
3.	0.70 - 0.79	Acceptable
4.	0.60 - 0.69	Questionable
5.	0.50 – 0.59	Poor
6.	Less than 0.50	Unacceptable

Source: Zahreen, 2018

Additionally, each variable's data must be normally distributed. This can be tested by plotting a Q-Q (quantile-quantile) plot for researchers to check the discrepancies between actual or collected figures with expected figures. If the discrepancies are

minimal, researchers can conclude the collected variable data is linearly and normally distributed (Das & Imon, 2016).

In examining the linear correlation relationship between each IV and the DV, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed using bivariate correlation analysis. A pair of variables can be classified as positively or negatively related, and strongly, moderately, or weakly associated based on the correlation coefficient's value. Indications of the ranges of correlation coefficient value are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: The Correlation Level Indications of Correlation Coefficient Interval

	Coefficient Interval	Correlation Level
1.	0.000 – 0.199	Very Weak
2.	0.200 - 0.399	Weak
3.	0.400 - 0.599	Medium
4.	0.600 - 0.799	Strong
5.	0.800 – 1.000	Very Strong

Source: Napitupulu et al. 2018

However, the IVs themselves are not expected to be strongly correlated. Multicollinear variables may adversely affect model predictions on unseen data (Ph.D & Kavlakoglu, 2023). Any changes in one variable may result in comparable changes in another when the IVs are highly correlated. The model outputs can become unstable due to significant fluctuations caused by even small changes in the data. The ANOVA (known as the F-test) and Variable Inflation Index (VIF) tests were used to assess multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is not a problem when the

VIF scores are less than 10 and the ANOVA or F-test is significant (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, Black, & Babin, 2006).

Finally, regression analysis is performed using the stepwise method to determine which IV is significantly and not significantly related to the DV at a precision level of 0.05. A hypothesis is supported when the IV is a significant variable, and vice versa when the IV is not a significant variable. Under the stepwise method, the first regression analysis model selects the most significant IV. This method continuously adds or subtracts variables methodically until a predefined statistical criterion is satisfied. IVs that do not show a strong correlation with the DV are removed using the stepwise method. The final model of the regression analysis shows only the composition of significant IVs.

Based on the final regression model, several statistical indicators are used to measure the relationships between the significant IVs and the DV. For example, the "R Square" figure displayed in the model summary demonstrates the percentage or proportion of the DV variance that all significant IVs can account for. The ANOVA and VIF test results confirm whether the significant IVs relate to the DV independently. Finally, t-test results demonstrate the intensity effect that each significant IV accounts for the variation in DV.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

The University needs to ensure all academic research adheres to ethical standards. Researchers (staff and students) must apply for ethical clearance, which is overseen by the University Ethics Committee Board, before conducting the pilot study and main survey. Ethical research is essential to minimise risks to participants, ensure

voluntary participation, and maintain the confidentiality of respondents' data. Researchers must complete the application form and submit it to the university's ethics committee. If the research's goal, data collection methods, and measures to protect participant privacy are planned ethically, the committee will issue an approval letter. After receiving the approval letter, the project researchers began their pilot and main study processes.

As required, the main study questionnaire attaches the Personal Data Protection Statement to assure respondents that the gathered data will be used only for scholarly research, not for profit. Additionally, respondents' personal demographic information and identity will be treated as private and confidential.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting and discussing the findings from data collected from the main survey.

4.1 Descriptive Results

This study targets Malaysian Gen-Z, ages 12 to 25 years old. A total of 384 answered questionnaires were collected. However, 17 were voided as the participants were neither aged between 12 and 25, knowledgeable about blind box marketing strategies, nor had they purchased a blind box before.

More females (60.8%) participated than males (39.2%) (see Table 4.1). Many of the first batch of snowball sampling respondents are university students, and the referrer tends to circulate the questionnaire to their friends who are also university students. Therefore, about 97.5% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 24. Most of them were pursuing a foundation or bachelor's degree or foundation (91.6%) and have monthly allowances below RM2000.

Table 4.1: Respondents' Demographic Profiles

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age (years)				
• < 18	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
• 18-24	358	97.5	97.5	98.6
• 25-30	5	1.4	1.4	100.0
Gender				
• Male	144	39.2	39.2	39.2
• Female	223	60.8	60.8	100.0
Education level				
• High school	14	3.8	3.8	3.8
• Foundation/ Bachelor degree	336	91.6	91.6	95.4
• Postgraduate	17	4.6	4.6	100.0
Monthly income/allowance				
• < RM2000	345	94.0	94.0	94.0
• RM2001-4000	16	4.4	4.4	98.4
• > RM4001	6	1.6	1.6	100.0

Note: The total number of respondents is 367

4.2 Inferential Results

A series of inferential statistical analyses was conducted to confirm the research project's hypotheses.

4.2.1 The Reliability Coefficient of Variables

Table 4.2 shows that the Cronbach's alpha values for all variables are more than the threshold value of 0.7. This suggests that the directional response (either agree or disagree) from most participants for all variables' items is consistent (Frost, 2022).

Table 4.2: Reliability Test Result of Studied Variables for Main Survey Data

Variable's name	Cronbach's Alpha Score	Number of items
IV1: Suppliers' attractiveness	0.837	4
IV2: Suppliers' trustworthiness	0.897	4
IV3: Suppliers' expertise	0.861	4
IV4: Perceived risk	0.818	4
DV: Intention to purchase blind boxes	0.886	3

4.2.2 Normality of Data Distribution

The Q-Q plots in Figure 4.1 show that the observed or actual value for each variable does not widely differ from its respective expected value. Also, none of the plots resemble a U-shape or internal U-shape pattern. This indicates that the variables' data are normally distributed. This supports the use of multiple linear regression analysis to confirm the hypotheses, which is discussed in the sub-topic 4.2.4.

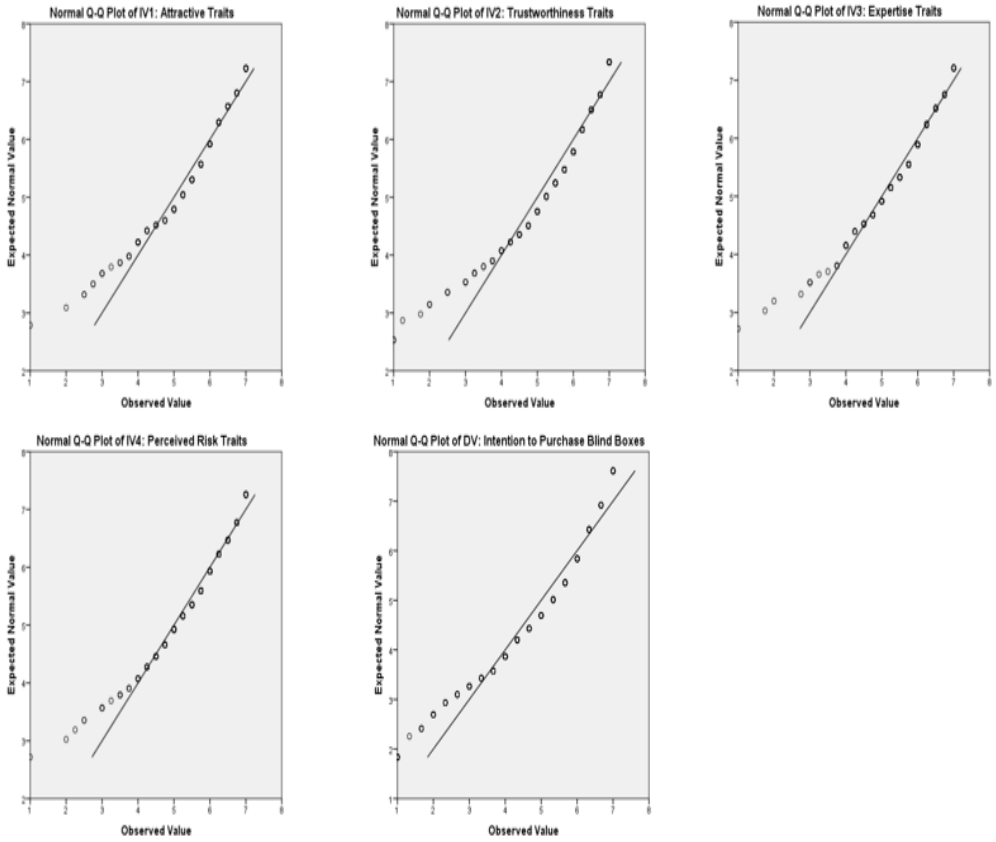

Figure 4.1: The Distribution of Study Variables Data

4.2.3 The Correlation between the Independent and Dependent Variables

A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables (Bhandari, 2021). Simply, a correlation analysis examines the level of association between each IV and the DV without the researcher controlling

or manipulating any of them. Additionally, the Person's correlation coefficient score denotes whether the variables are positively or negatively associated. The correlation result indicates that all IVs are positively and weakly associated with the DV (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Correlation between the Independent and Dependent Variables

	IV1: Attractive-ness	IV2: Trustworthiness	IV3: Expertise	IV4: Perceived Risk	DV: Intention to purchase
IV1: Suppliers' attractiveness					
Pearson Correlation	1	.578**	.684**	.638**	.321**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
N	367	367	367	367	367
IV2: Suppliers' trustworthiness					
Pearson Correlation	.578**	1	.680**	.616**	.253**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
N	367	367	367	367	367
IV3: Suppliers' expertise					
Pearson Correlation	.684**	.680**	1	.741**	.357**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
N	367	367	367	367	367
IV4: Perceived Risks					
Pearson Correlation	.638**	.616**	.741**	1	.361**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
N	367	367	367	367	367
DV: Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes					
Pearson Correlation	.321**	.253**	.357**	.361**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
N	367	367	367	367	367

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2.4 Multicollinearity and Multiple Linear Regression Result

The stepwise method has run two rounds of regression analysis. Table 4.3 shows that not all IVs can significantly impact the DV. In the second regression analysis round, two IVs: suppliers' attractiveness and trustworthiness (IV1 and IV2) were excluded from the regression analysis. As a result, hypotheses H1 and H2 are not supported. In other words, only two IVs were retained as key predictors for subsequent analysis: perceived risk and suppliers' expertise (IV3 and IV4)-see footnote "c" in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Excluded Variables from Regression Model

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics		
						Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance
1	IV1: Suppliers' attractiveness	.153[b]	2.438	.015	.127	.594	1.685	.594
	IV2: Suppliers' trustworthiness	.049[b]	.788	.431	.041	.621	1.611	.621
	IV3:Suppliers' expertise	.199[b]	2.767	.006	.144	.451	2.216	.451
2	IV1: Suppliers' attractiveness	.099[c]	1.439	.151	.075	.494	2.024	.376
	IV2: Suppliers' trustworthiness	-.028[c]	-.410	.682	-.022	.510	1.960	.371

a. Dependent Variable: DV: Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), IV4: Perceived Risk

c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), IV4: Perceived Risk , IV3: Suppliers' Expertise

The R-squared value of 0.148 shown in Table 4.5 indicates that 14.8% of the DV (purchasing intentional behaviour) can be explained by the two significant IVs (the perceived risk and suppliers' expertise). The remaining 85.2% of the variation is attributed to other variables not examined in this research.

Table 4.5: Regression Summary Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.361[a]	.130	.128	1.32616
2	.385[b]	.148	.144	1.31424

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV4: Perceived Risk

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV4: Perceived Risk , IV3: Suppliers' Expertise

c. Dependent Variable: DV: Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

Table 4.6 denotes the ANOVA test result, confirming the independent status of each significant IV (IV3 and IV4). When the IVs are highly correlated, multicollinearity issues emerge (Ph.D & Kavlakoglu, 2023).

Table 4.6: ANOVA Result

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	96.218	1	96.218	54.710	.000[b]
	Residual	641.928	365	1.759		
	Total	738.146	366			
2	Regression	109.440	2	54.720	31.681	.000[c]
	Residual	628.706	364	1.727		
	Total	738.146	366			

a. Dependent Variable: DV: Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV4: Perceived Risk

c. Predictors: (Constant), IV4: Perceived Risk , IV3: Suppliers' Expertise

VIF scores are computed to confirm the multicollinearity issue, too. Table 4.7 depicts that the significant IVs' VIF scores are below 3, well below the threshold value of 10. This indicates that the significant IVs are not highly correlated with each other.

Table 4.7 also informs readers which IV is significantly related to the. Based on the t-statistic result, the perceived risk stands out as the most significant IV driving the intention to purchase blind boxes (with a regression coefficient value of 0,308), followed by the suppliers' expertise (regression coefficient value of 0.285). Or it indicates that both significant IVs (IV3 and IV4) are positively related to the DV, and this confirms the support of hypotheses H3 and H4.

Table 4.7: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.161	.400		5.399	.000		
IV4: Perceived Risks	.520	.070	.361	7.397	.000	1.000	1.000
(Constant)	1.750	.424		4.130	.000		
IV4: Perceived Risk	.308	.104	.213	2.964	.003	.451	2.216
IV3: Suppliers' Expertise	.285	.103	.199	2.767	.006	.451	2.216

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to Purchase Blind Boxes

From Table 4.7, the project's multiple regression equation is ...

Y (DV) = 1.750 + 0.308 IV4 (Perceived risk) + 0.285 IV3 (expertise)

The regression modelling results show that perceived risk is the most important indicator that motivates Malaysian Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes. Uncertainty (a perceived risk trait) may enhance some potential buyers' excitement, surprise, and thrill of buying blind boxes, which coincides with the blind box marketing strategy. However, most respondents agreed that other perceived risk traits, such as the possibility of losing money when the blind box product or service is not worth buying or discrepancy between expected and bought product's feature or quality, override the excitement, surprise, and thrill of buying blind boxes.

Malaysian Gen-Z consider whether blind boxes are worth purchasing. This explains why most respondents appreciate suppliers who possess specific expertise traits

such as the ability to identify and fix problems proactively, compared to other credibility's dimensional variables (attractiveness and trustworthiness).

Finally, a PP plot is plotted to countercheck if the accumulated effects generated by all significant IVs are linearly connected to the DV (see Figure 4.2). Compared to the Q-Q plot, which aims to examine the data linearity of each variable, the P-P Plot compares the cumulative probability of the observed data with the cumulative probabilities of the expected data of all significant IVs. The P-P plot shown in Figure 4.2 confirms the linear relationship because the discrepancies between the cumulative observed data and the expected data are minimal.

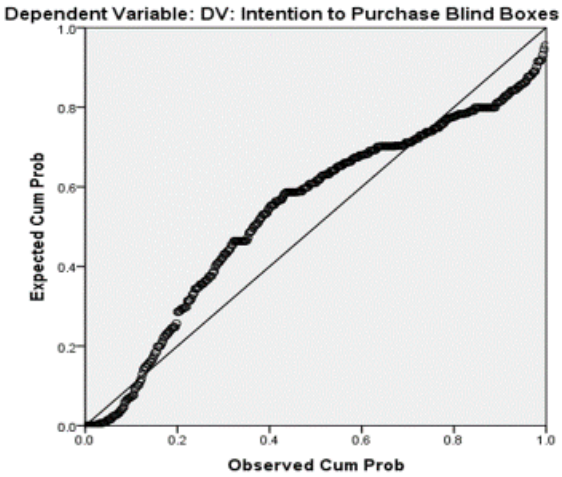

Figure 4.2: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standard Residual

4.3 Current Research Development Model

From the hypotheses confirmation results, the project's final research model is presented in Figure 4.3.

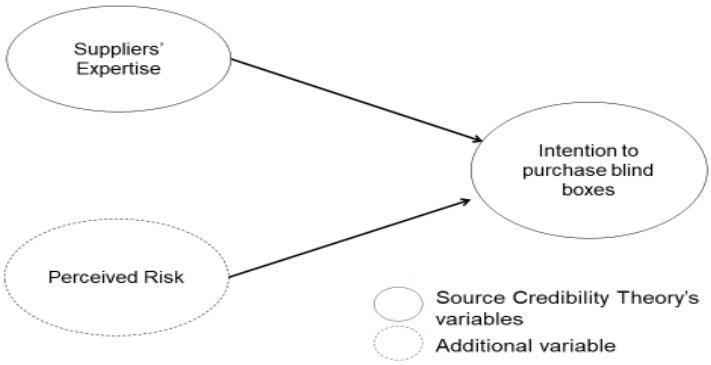

Figure 4.3: Current Research Model

4.4 Conclusion of the Statistical Result

From the regression modelling result, hypotheses H3 and H4 are supported, and H1 and H2 are not supported, see Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Summary of Current Hypotheses Confirmation

Hypothesis Statements	Remark
H1: The suppliers' attractiveness and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.	Not supported
H2: The suppliers' trustworthiness and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.	Not supported
H3: The suppliers' expertise and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.	Supported
H4: The reduction of perceived risk and Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes are positively related.	Supported

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations

5.1 Accomplishment of Research Objectives and Discussion

The project examines the role of credible suppliers and perceived risk in motivating Malaysian Gen-Z to purchase blind boxes. To achieve the two established research objectives, hypotheses are developed for testing. The following texts discuss the accomplishment of the research objectives based on the statistical results.

To achieve the first objective, three hypotheses, H1, H2, and H3, were formulated to examine the direct effect generated by the credibility of blind box suppliers (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) on Gen-Z's purchase intention. The findings reveal that H1 and H2 are not supported, while H3 is supported.

The findings show that hypothesis H1, which posited the positive relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention, is not supported. Not all respondents were attracted to the blind box marketing appeal. Although aesthetic design and creative packaging are attractive, not all respondents were eager to learn more about the products or services hidden in the blind box. Possibly, they worry or fear that the secret goods are not worth purchasing. The result aligns with To (2024) and Nguyen et al.'s (2024) study results.

The non-support of hypothesis H2, which proposed a positive relationship between suppliers' trustworthiness and purchase intention, is also not supported. Not all

respondents appreciate blind box's trustworthiness traits, such as honesty, integrity, and transparency, in their buying decision. Business trading that is driven by impulse or novelty buying behaviour, such as blind boxes, may be overshadowed by other indicators, such as cost-benefit analysis, even if the suppliers are well-trusted companies. The result is consistent with Ba and Pavlou's (2002) study findings, which suggest trustworthiness might not be enough to increase customers' online shopping intention when customers were sceptical about other factors.

In contrast, hypothesis H3 is supported. Most respondents show a clear preference for suppliers with high expertise traits, such as being able to assure potential buyers about the intrinsic or core value of the blind box content. The result is consistent with Liang et al.'s (2021) respondents' behaviour, higher perceived expertise increases their confidence and purchasing decision. Other suppliers' expertise traits, such as the ability to identify and fix problems proactively, aid in lowering potential customers' sense of uncertainty, especially where potential buyers are unclear about the product or service hidden in a blind box.

In achieving the second objective, hypothesis H4 was formulated to examine the direct effect of perceived risk on Gen-Z's intentions to purchase blind boxes. Generally, consumers worry about perceived risk that may arise from purchasing something or through a specific platform. However, blind box trading is performing well in foreign countries, such as China and Japan, despite consumers being well aware of the risks, such as the possibility of discrepancy in the blind box's contents as compared to their expectations. Possibly, high perceived risk enhances the feel of excitement, surprise, and thrill, which drive potential overseas buyers to purchase blind boxes. Contrarily, this project predicts that Malaysian Gen-Z's purchase intention increases when suppliers reduce the perceived risk traits. The Malaysian buyers tend to buy things that are worth purchasing. They prefer blind box suppliers to do something if they feel unsatisfied upon receiving the purchased blind box's product or service. This result aligns with Forsythe et al. (2006) and Indiani et al.'s (2015) study results.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 For Policy Planning

Being the most important indicator that motivates Malaysian Gen-Z's intention to purchase blind boxes, policymakers need to plan the perceived risk traits carefully. Uncertainty is a perceived risk trait that could increase potential buyers' excitement and intention to find out what product or service is hidden in a black box. When buyers are surprised by the blind box's product or service, they may feel overjoyed or disappointed.

The support of hypothesis H4 shows that the respondents' intention to buy blind boxes increases when suppliers reduce the perceived risk traits. Understanding the target's preferences and expectations is essential. Using social media tools to interact with potential buyers helps blind box suppliers to elicit the potential risk determinants that could decrease their tendency to purchase blind boxes. Then, appropriate policies need to be strategized to mitigate the risk.

For example, buyers can return the bought blind box for a refund if they feel the hidden product or service does not meet their expected appearance or performance. Implementing fair and transparent refund and return policies can reduce the perceived risk, particularly in cases when products are misrepresented or fail to match up to customer expectations. Publicizing such action will motivate Malaysian Gen-Z to purchase blind boxes.

The significant impact of suppliers' expertise shows that a lack of expertise traits, such as market knowledge, selling experience, and professionalism practices, lowers the blind box purchase intention, and vice versa (related to the support of

H3). To reduce potential buyers' feelings of uncertainty, suppliers must assure potential buyers about the intrinsic or core value of the blind box contents. Strategic partnerships with experienced business partners assist suppliers in better understanding the intrinsic or core value of a blind box's product or service that potential buyers expect. Additionally, collaboration with supply chain suppliers such as logistics companies enables blind box suppliers to expedite the delivery status for online purchases. This enables blind box suppliers to anticipate potential challenges, customise their product offering, and take proactive measures to resolve such problems before they hurt customer satisfaction.

5.2.2 For Literature

The propositions of Social Cognitive Theory offer valuable theoretical guidance for researchers exploring how cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors interact to influence decision-making. In the blind box market, SCT offers a helpful framework for examining how customer purchase intentions are impacted by supplier credibility, which is demonstrated by their marketing appeal's attractiveness and their trustworthiness and expertise. However, when empirical data do not support some theoretical claims, researchers need to explore plausible explanations that relate to demographic, environmental, or technological revolution factors.

The non-support of hypothesis H1 suggests that not all blind box suppliers are successful in creating marketing appeals that are visually attractive and emotionally engaging. This could result from poor design and branding skills or a lack of knowledge about what attracts the Gen-Z market. Marketing strategies may have less of an impact on purchase intention if they don't connect with consumers. Future research should therefore examine how consumers in this niche market interpret various branding narratives, emotional triggers, and design elements.

Similarly, the lack of support for hypothesis H2 demonstrates the variation in how customers evaluate the trustworthiness of suppliers. Although some respondents recognise and value qualities like honesty, reliability, truthfulness, and transparency, other traits like selling price may override the trustworthiness trait. This indicates that behaviour is not always determined by trustworthiness. This could be influenced by personal experiences, cultural expectations, or levels of scepticism toward online sellers.

The support of hypotheses H3 (expertise) demonstrates that suppliers' expertise, like knowledge of customer preferences and the ability to solve problems proactively, is an important factor in purchase intention. Such a credibility trait (expertise) relates to ways to handle the perceived risk problems. An expert supplier reduces certain perceived risk traits, such as uncertainty or dissatisfaction that may arise due to a discrepancy about the bought blind box product or service and the buyer's expectation. Future studies should examine the relationship between expertise and perceived risk. This insight will be particularly useful for emerging businesses aiming to enter and compete effectively in the blind box market.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

First, this study's findings are limited by its cross-sectional design, with the project confined to only two academic trimesters. While this approach provided timely insights into Gen-Z's blind box purchasing behaviours, it cannot account for potential seasonal variations or long-term changes in consumer preferences that might emerge over a more extended research period. The time-bound nature of our data collection means our findings represent only a snapshot of current attitudes toward credible suppliers and perceived risk in blind box purchases.

To address this limitation, future research should adopt a longitudinal approach by collecting data over an extended period. This allows researchers to track changes in purchase intentions as the blind box market evolves, including seasonal variations and long-term shifts in consumer behaviour, especially as more suppliers begin offering blind boxes and as both suppliers and consumers become more knowledgeable about blind box marketing strategies. The longitudinal approach would be particularly valuable for tracking the evolution of perceived risk factors and supplier credibility assessments as the Malaysian blind box market matures. By implementing multiple data collection methods, future studies can better understand how supplier credibility and perceived risk influence purchasing decisions over time, particularly as consumers and suppliers gain more experience with blind box marketing strategies.

Second, our survey encountered notable gender response disparities, with female participants (60%) significantly outnumbering males (40%). This imbalance occurred primarily because male respondents declined participation more frequently. The project’s findings are more representative of female views, and male respondents’ feedback is somewhat underrepresented.

Future research should employ face-to-face survey methods with trained facilitators to actively engage male respondents to mitigate the gender imbalance observed in this project's survey. Additionally, future researchers need to understand the discrepancy that may arise in understanding the meaning of each item statement among the male and female respondents.

Thirdly, while the study focuses on credible suppliers and perceived risk as key motivators, other potential factors such as social media influence or demographic background were not extensively examined. Younger generations are technology-savvy, and smart devices are used extensively for business trading and leisure communication. Therefore, social media may influence the way their networks perceive a blind box supplier's credibility trait. Furthermore, consumers' expenditures are very much constrained by their level of disposable income or allowances. Future research should examine how social influence and disposable income are linked to the credibility trait using an inductive or deductive approach. Future research could benefit from incorporating the testing of additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of blind box purchasing motivations.

REFERENCES

Ai, L.K. (2024, June 6). *[Big read] Big business in little blind boxes. ThinkChina - Big Reads, Opinion & Columns on China*. https://www.thinkchina.sg/economy/big-read-big-business-little-blind-boxes

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T.

Ba, S. & Pavlou, P.A. (2002). Evidence of the effect of trust-building technology in electronic markets: price premiums and buyer behavior. *MIS Quarterly, 26*(3), 243. https://doi.org/10.2307/4132332.

Baker, M.J. & Churchill, G.A. (1977). The impact of physically attractive models on advertising evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research, 14(4), 538–555.* doi:10.1177/002224377701400411.

Baker, J., Parasuraman, A., Grewal, D., & Glenn B.V. (2002). The influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived merchandise value and patronage intentions. *Journal of Marketing, 66*(2), 120–141. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.66.2.120.184.

Belonax Jr, J.J., Newell, S.J., & Plank, R.E. (2007). The role of purchase importance on buyer perceptions of the trust and expertise components of supplier and salesperson credibility in business-to-business relationships. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 27*(3), 247–258. https://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134270304

Beran, T.N. & Violato, C. (2010). Structural equation modeling in medical research: a primer. *BMC Research Notes*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/1756-0500-3-267

Burns, R.P. (2008). *Business research methods and statistics using SPSS*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bhandari, P. (2021). *Correlational research | definition, methods, and examples*. Scribbr. https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/correlational-research/

Bhatnagar, A., Misra, S., & Rao, H.R. (2000). On risk, convenience, and Internet shopping behavior. *Communications of the ACM, 43*(11), 98–105. https://dl.acm.org/doi/fullHtml/10.1145/353360.353371

Chan, J. (2021, March 4). *Video | Explained: Pop Mart, the company behind "blind box" toys | KrASIA*. KrASIA. https://kr-asia.com/video-explained-pop-mart-the-company-behind-blind-box-toys

Dam, T.C. (2020). Influence of brand trust, perceived value on brand preference and purchase intention. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business, 7*(10), 939–947. https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no10.939.

Das, K.R. & Imon, A. (2016). A brief review of tests for normality. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 5-12. doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.12.

Daume, J. & Hüttl-Maack, V. (2020). Curiosity-inducing advertising: how positive emotions and expectations drive the effect of curiosity on consumer evaluations of products. *International Journal of Advertising, 39*, 307–328. doi: 10.1080/02650487.2019.1633163

Dowling, G.R., & Staelin, R. (1994). A model of perceived risk and intended risk-handling activity. *Journal of Consumer Research, 21*(1), 119–134.

Faraji-Rad, A. & Pham, M.T. (2017). Uncertainty increases the reliance on affect in decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research, 44*(1), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucw073.

Featherman, M.S. & Pavlou, P.A. (2003). Predicting E-Service Adoption: A Perceived Risk Facets Perspective. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 59*(4), 451-474. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1071-5819(03)00111-3.

Forsythe, S., Liu, C., Shannon, D., & Gardner, L.C. (2006). Development of a scale to measure the perceived benefits and risks of online shopping. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 20*(2), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.20061.

Frost, J. (2022). *Cronbach's Alpha: Definition, Calculations & Example*. Statistics by Jim. https://statisticsbyjim.com/basics/cronbachs-alpha/

Fu, L. & Zhao, Z. (2022). The Chinese blind box market needs regulating. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*. Proceedings of the 2022 2nd International Conference on Enterprise Management and Economic Development (ICEMED 2022). https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.220603.077.

Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., Black, W.C., & Babin, R. E. (2006). *Multivariate Data Analysi*s (6th ed.). Pearson Prentice Hall.

Hassan, H. (2020, July 11*). According to stats, Malaysians spent an average of RM4,534 monthly in 2019*. The Rakyat Post. https://www.therakyatpost.com/news/malaysia/2020/07/11/malaysians-spend-an-average-of-rm4534-per-month-in-2019-according-to-stats/

Hayes, A. (2022, January 10). *Stepwise Regression*. Investopedia. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/stepwise-regression.asp

Hernandez, J.M.C., & Mazzon, J.A. (2007). Adoption of Internet Banking: A Model Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour. *International Journal of Bank Marketing, 25*(2), 72-88.

Hovland, C.I., Janis, I.L., & Kelly, H.H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion.* Yale University Press. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1953-15071-000.

Hsee, C.K., & Ruan, B. (2016). The Pandora effect: the power and peril of curiosity. *Psychological science, 27,* 659–666. doi: 10.1177/0956797616631733\.

Indiani, N.L P., Rahyuda, I.K., Kerti Yasa, N.N., & Sukaatmadja, I. (2015). Perceived risk and trust as major determinants of actual purchase, transcending the influence of intention. *ASEAN Marketing Journal*, 1-13. https://repositori.unud.ac.id/protected/storage/upload/repositori/222a4ba566ada299f368feaa7ae43874.pdf

Jia-Ju. (2023, May 24). *Pop Mart's First Store In Malaysia Is Now Open At Pavilion KL, M'sians Can Join In On The Blind Box Craze*. The Smart Local Malaysia - Travel, Lifestyle, Culture & Language Guide. https://thesmartlocal.my/pop-mart-malaysia/.

Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D.K. (2015). Likert scale: Explored and explained. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, *7*(4), 396. DOI: 10.9734/BJAST/2015/14975.

Kahle, L.R. & Homer, P.M. (1985). Physical Attractiveness of the Celebrity Endorser: A Social Adaptation Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research, 11*(4), 954-961.

Kemp, S. (2024, February 23). Digital 2024: *Malaysia — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*. https://datareportal.com/digital-in-malaysia

Kim, D.J., Ferrin, D.L., & Rao, H.R. (2008). A Trust-Based Approach to Online Loyalty and E-Service Quality. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 9*(6), 31–55.

Kim, C., Mirusmonov, M., & Lee, I. (2010). An empirical examination of factors influencing the intention to use mobile payment. *Computers in Human Behaviour, 26*(3), 310–322. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2009.10.013

Lamm, A.J. & Lamm, K.W. (2019). Using non-probability sampling methods in agricultural and extension education research. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *26*(1), 52–59. DOI:10.5191/iaee.2019.26105.

Liang, X., Hu, X., Islam, T., & Mubarik, M.S. (2021). Social support, source credibility, social influence, and solar photovoltaic panels purchase intention. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research, 28*(41), 57842-57859.

Liberto, D. (2024, July 1). What are consumer protection laws? *Investopedia.* https://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/10/know-your-consumer-protection-laws.asp

Liu, Y., Chen, X., & Wang, Z. (2020). Perceived risk in education technology: implications for higher education institutions. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 68*(3), 1223-1245.

Lisichkova, N. & Othman, Z. (2017). The impact of influencers on online purchase intent. *Research Gate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338107402

Loewenstein, G. (1994). The psychology of curiosity: a review and reinterpretation. *Psychological Bulletin, 116*, 75–98. doi: 10.1037/0033 2909.116.1.75.

Masud, A.A. (2024, August 14). *Inductive vs Deductive Research: Differences in Approaches. QuestionPro.* https://www.questionpro.com/blog/inductive-vs-deductive-research/

Marks, L.J. & Kamins, M.A. (1988). The use of product sampling and advertising: Effects of sequence of exposure and degree of advertising claim exaggeration on consumers' belief strength, belief confidence, and attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research, 25*(3), 266-281. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378802500 30.

Mills, J., & Aronson, E. (1965). Opinion change as a function of the communicator's attractiveness and desire to influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1*(2), 173–177. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0021646.

Mukherjee, A., & Nath, P. (2007). Role of electronic trust in online retailing: A re-examination of the commitment-trust theory. *European Journal of Marketing, 41*(9/10), 1173–1202. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560710773390

Mvondo, G.F.N., Jing, F., & Hussain, K. (2023). What is in the box? Investigating the benefits and risks of the blind box selling strategy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 71*, 103189. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103189.

Napitupulu, D., Rahim, R., Abdullah, D., Setiawan, M., Abdillah, L., Ahmar, A., Simarmata, J., Hidayat, R., Nurdiyanto, H., & Pranolo, A. (2018). Analysis of student satisfaction toward quality of service facility. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, *954*(1), 012019. https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/954/1/012019.

Nguyen, N.T., Vo, V.T., & Nguyen, A.T. (2024). Effects of TikTok Influencers on the Purchase Intention of Gen-Z: Cosmetic Industry. *Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, *7*(1). DOI:10.30560/jems.v7n1p1.

Ohanian, R. (1991). The impact of celebrity spokespersons' perceived image on consumers' intention to purchase. *Journal of Advertising Research, 31*(1), 46–54. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1991-26094-001.

Pavlou, P.A. (2003). Consumer Acceptance of Electronic Commerce: Integrating Trust and Risk with the Technology Acceptance Model. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce,* *7*(3), 101–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2003.11044275.

Pavlou, N. & Fygenson, N. (2006). Understanding and Predicting Electronic Commerce adoption: An extension of the theory of planned behaviour. *MIS Quarterly, 30*(1), 115. https://doi.org/10.2307/25148720.

Ph.D, J.M. & Kavlakoglu, E. (2023, November 21). *Multicollinearity*. Ibm.com. https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/multicollinearity

Reports, T. (2024, July 11). *Blind Box Decorations Market Size | Future business analysis to 2032*. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/blind-box-decorations-market-size-future-business-kp7hc/.

Russo, G.M., Tomei, P.A., Serra, B., & Mello, S. (2021). Differences in using 5- or 7-point Likert scale: an application in food safety culture. *Organizational Cultures*, *21*(2), 1. DOI:10.18848/2327-8013/CGP/v21i02/1-17

Serbanescu, A. (2022). Millennials and Gen-Z in the Era of Social Media. *Social media, technology, and new generations: digital millennial generation and generation Z*, *61*.

Siddharta, S. (2024, August 27). *Topic: E-commerce in Malaysia*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/topics/10292/e-commerce-in-malaysia/

Shen, L., Hsee, C.K., & Talloen, J.H. (2019). The fun and function of uncertainty: Uncertain incentives reinforce repetitive decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research. 46,* 69–81. doi: 10.1093/jcr/ucy062.

Shin, D.H. (2019). Understanding the Impact of Perceived Risk on Acceptance of Robot-Based Services. *Journal of Business Research, 98*, 238–245.

Supriyanto, A., Jayanti, T., Hikmawan, M.A., Zulfa, F.N., & Fanzelina, A.S. (2023). The Influence of Perceived Credibility, Trustworthiness, Perceived Expertise, Likeability, Similarity, Familiarity, and Attractiveness on Purchase Intention: A Study on Halal Bakery Products in Kudus Regency. NIZAM: *International Journal of Islamic Studies, 1*(1), 29-45. https://journal.csspublishing.com/index.php/nizam/article/view/342.

Susmann, M.W. & Wegener, D.T. (2022). The independent effects of source expertise and trustworthiness on retraction believability: The moderating role of vested interest. *Memory & Cognition*, *51*(4), 845–861. https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-022-01374-3.

Thomas, O. (2024, February 14). *The Amazon mystery box scam - everything you need to know. MalwareTips Blog*. https://malwaretips.com/blogs/amazon-mystery-box-scam/.

Tjiptono, F., Khan, G., Yeong, E.S., & Kunchamboo, V. (2020). Generation Z in Malaysia: The four generations. In *The new Generation Z in Asia: Dynamics, differences, digitalization* (pp. 149–163). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Tse, A. (2023, March 26). *Diving into Blind Box Culture*. Generasian. https://generasian.blog/2023/03/24/diving-into-blind-box-culture/.

To, A. (2024). Impact of TikTok influencer characteristics on Generation Z's purchase intention in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *Journal of System and Management Sciences, 14*(4). https://doi.org/10.33168/jsms.2024.0410

Umeogu, B. (2012). Source Credibility: A Philosophical Analysis. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, *02*(02), 112–115. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2012.22017.

Venkatesh, V. & Davis, F.D. (2000). A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: four longitudinal field studies. *Management Science, 46*(2), 186–204. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2634758.

Von Hohenberg, B.C., & Guess, A.M. (2022). When do sources persuade? The effect of source credibility on opinion change. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, *10*(3), 328–342. https://doi.org/10.1017/xps.2022.2.

Wilson, T.D., Centerbar, D.B., Kermer, D.A., & Gilbert, D.T. (2005). The pleasures of uncertainty: prolonging positive moods in ways people do not anticipate. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*(1), 5–21. doi: 10.1037/0022 3514.88.1.5

Wang, D.J., & Zhou, C.C. (2021). Blind box consumption: a new phenomenon of contemporary youth consumption lifestyle. *Gansu Social Science*, *2*, 120–126.

Xinhua. (2023, June 16). *China draws the regulatory bottom line on blind-box businesses*. https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202306/16/content_WS648bb0f8c6d0868f4e8dce88.html

Yang, Y. (2023). Analysis of the marketing strategy of Blind Box. *Advances in Economics Management and Political Sciences*, *27*(1), 26–30. https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/27/20231206

Zahreen M.A., Ismail, K.S., & Saleh, A.L. (2018). Contractor's Performance Appraisal System in the Malaysian Construction Industry: Current Practice, Perception and Understanding. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, *7*(3), 46. https://doi.org/10.14419/ijet.v7i3.9.15272

Zeng, X. (2021). Emotional comfort, flexible social interaction and value realisation: mystery box fashion from the perspective of youth subculture. *Journal of Fujian Normal University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), (1): 133–141.

Zhang, L. & Phakdeephirot, N. (2023). The influence of blind box marketing on Consumers' purchase intention: taking "POPMART" as an example. *Highlights in Art and Design*, *4*(2), 154–160. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ad46/6f1c51dd045b87ee32b138355fb350f88598.pdf.

Zhang, Y., & Zhang, T.Q. (2022). The effect of blind box product uncertainty on consumers' purchase intention. The Mediating Role of Perceived Value and the Moderating Role of Purchase Intention. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.946527.

Zhang, Z. (2021, July). *Research on blind boxes and their marketing strategy*. In 2021 International conference on economic development and business culture (ICEDBC 2021) (pp. 115–118). Atlantis Press.