
THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS
ON GEN Z CONSUMER'S PURCHASE INTENTION
TOWARD SUSTAINABLE FASHION BRANDS IN
MALAYSIA

LEE JOE YEE

CHEE SHI YONG

BACHELOR OF MARKETING (HONS)

UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

TEH HONG PIOW FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND
FINANCE

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

JUNE 2026

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BY

LEE JOE YEE

CHEE SHI YONG

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

BACHELOR OF MARKETING (HONS)

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- (3) Equal contribution has been made by each group member in completing the FYP.
- (4) The word count of this research report is 10,829 words.

Name of Student:	Student ID:	Signature:
1.Lee Joe Yee	22ABB06907	<i>Joey</i>
2.Chee Shi Yong	23ABB01110	<i>shiyong</i>

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Supervisor's Name: Tan Mom Zee

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our special thanks of gratitude to our beloved supervisor, Ms Tan Mom Zee , for the valuable guidance and support, and for sharing her experiences with us in completing the research.

Thank you.

DEDICATION

This research project is exclusively dedicated to our supervisor, Ms Tan Mom Zee. As well as all friends and family members. Truly appreciate the support, encouragement, and suggestions that have been given to us that help us to complete the research on time.

PREFACE

This Final Year Project (FYP) marks the completion of my academic journey as a marketing student. The study focuses on “*The Impact of Social Media Influencers in Shaping Consumer Purchase Intentions Towards Sustainable Fashion Brands in Malaysia.*” It reflects the growing importance of sustainability and the influence of social media on Generation Z consumers.

This project has enhanced my understanding of research methods, data analysis, and marketing theories, while also developing my critical thinking and time management skills.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, as well as to all respondents, family, and friends for their support and encouragement throughout this journey.

I hope this research provides useful insights for marketers and future researchers in the field of sustainable fashion.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media influencers on Gen Z consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia. The study applies the Source Credibility Theory, which includes attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as the key dimensions. The data were collected with a Google Form through a questionnaire from 124 respondents. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS software with version 4.1.1.4. The findings showed that attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise have significant positive relationships with consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion. Furthermore, attitude was found to have a strong positive relationship with purchase intention. This research study provides deep insights into how social media influencer credibility can effectively encourage sustainable fashion consumption among Gen Z consumers in Malaysia.

Keywords: Sustainable Fashion Brand ; Purchase Intention; Gen Z; Malaysia; Theory of Source Credibility

Subject Area: HF5410-5417.5 Marketing. Distribution of products

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Attractiveness
DV	Dependent Variable
E	Expertise
IV	Independent Variable
P	Purchase Intention
CR	Composite Reliability
SCT	Source Credibility Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
T	Trustworthiness
AT	Attitude
PLS	Partial Least Squares
Gen	Generation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the research background on how social media influencers affect Gen Z purchase intentions toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia, focusing on attitude formation and its impact on purchase intention.

1.1 Research Background

As the concept of "protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility" is gaining more and more importance, people are gradually start to pay more attention to environmental awareness and ethical consumption, and sustainable fashion has therefore attracted widespread attention around the world. Although sustainable fashion is gaining more and more attention from the public, consumers are still on the sidelines in terms of awareness and information about it (UNEP, 2025). Sustainable fashion involves multiple dimensions, such as societal values, marketing strategies, industrial practices, and the essential role of changing consumer behavior (Henninger et al., 2017). At the same time, the fashion industry is often criticized for producing high levels of carbon emissions, high water consumption and labor exploitation, and is now under pressure to implement more sustainable practices. Today, the fashion industry they are the largest polluter today, so it is important to understand more about sustainable fashion. In addition, the concept of sustainable fashion has been evolving in recent decades and common includes different synonyms and related names such as eco-fashion, green fashion or ethical fashion, and is part of the slow fashion movement (Mandarić et al., 2021). According to Niinimäki et al. (2020), the fashion industry faces environmental issues at every stage, from production to inventory handling, so energy and waste

reduction have attracted much attention from the audiences. Furthermore, the steady rise of fast fashion brands has led to growing consumer demand for sustainable fashion brands. Sustainable fashion neither depletes resources nor causes environmental harm or ethical issues. Sustainable fashion brands are businesses that incorporate eco-friendly materials, ethical labor practices, and recyclable manufacturing methods into the production of their products. Their goal is to meet consumer demand while minimizing negative impacts on society and the environment. As awareness of environmental and ethical concerns in the fashion industry increases, many brands are making efforts to pursue sustainable development (Kim & Oh, 2020). Mohammed and Razé (2023) research indicates that consumers can reduce and overcome environmental issues by choosing products and services that are not harmful to the environment and society so which can produce a positive impact on the environment and society. Moreover, products manufactured by the fashion industry must align with consumer demands and expectations to ensure maximize return on their investment in sustainable brands. Globally, driven by the massive rise in environmental consciousness and social responsibility, Generation Z are expected to become the largest consumer group in the future. They are more and more showing strong interests and expectations for brands that adopt environmentally friendly and ethically compliant production approaches (Liu, 2022). Despite sustainable fashion's significant impact to the environment, it is still a relatively smaller and fast-growing segment within the apparel market. According to Adams (2024), sustainable clothing accounted for less than 4% of global fashion sales in 2021, but is projected to reach 6.1% by 2026. Additionally, research indicates that the overall size of the sustainable fashion market is expected to reach \$8.25 billion in 2023, with a continuing upward trend.

In recent years, with the growing development of technology, the rise of the digital marketing era has driven significant transformations in the fashion industry. Furthermore, social media marketing has fundamentally shifted consumer behavior, with social media influencers taking on a critical role in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions. In 2024, the growth of influencer marketing has developed into a US\$10 billion industry in Malaysia and is expected to continue growing at a

compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.5%. Nowadays, influencer marketing has become a dominant force, especially among Gen Z. They are digital age natives who are highly active on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook (Madhavedi et al., 2025). Recently, the research indicated that the impact of social media influencers is often determined by their perception of credibility. These characteristics deeply impact social media audiences' perception of influencer recommendations, thereby influencing their attitudes toward products promoted by influencers. For instance, Adel Sitorus et al. (2024) have developed and validated measurement metrics for these credibility factors within the sustainable fashion marketing field, which confirmed that an influencer's credibility can significantly shape consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. It is crucial for sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia to incorporate these insights, since Gen Z consumers are generally more sensitive to the authenticity, accessibility, and perceived trustworthiness of the influencers they follow. In today's era where technology reshapes daily life, social media influencer marketing is an evolving field that has become an indispensable and important component within corporate marketing mixes. Its strategies aim to enhance brand awareness, bringing brands into the public eye and ultimately influencing audiences' purchasing decisions. In addition, social media influencers shape audience attitudes through blogs, posts, and other social media, and provide highly relevant advice to other consumers. The positive fashion influencers not only guide consumers' initial choices but also indirectly become the major source of the fashion product information for the general public. Gen Z consumers compared to the other generations is most heavily relied on influencer recommendations, valuing creditability and resonance derived from real-life experiences. This clear trend presents a unique opportunity for sustainable fashion brands to precisely target the environmentally aware young consumers through social media influencer collaborations (Ge, 2024).

The sustainable fashion movement is still in its infancy in Malaysia, but young urbanites are becoming increasingly interested in it. However, there are relatively few examples of sustainable fashion practices in Malaysia, and re-examining core values and solutions appears to be a challenge. Additionally, challenges such as high prices, limited supply, and low consumer awareness hinder

fashion brands from achieving widespread popularity (Hasbullah et al., 2020). According to a study by Ali et al. (2020), although fashion giants have aggressively promoted ethical manufacturing and recycling programs in Malaysia, the fashion industry has yet to demonstrate outstanding performance. Despite influencer marketing on social media is broadly applied within Malaysia's digital economy, but its effectiveness in promoting sustainable fashion to Generation Z remains understudied. Furthermore, most studies review influencer marketing from a global perspective, ignoring localized factors such as the unique cultural differences, trust dynamics, and platform preferences of Malaysian audiences. Moreover, based on data indicated that social media shows high usage rates in Malaysia. It is estimated that over 86% of Gen Z, especially those aged 18 to 28, are active on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. They follow at least one or more social media influencers, and they most also have purchased the products that are recommended by these influencers. Consequently, Malaysian social media influencers have a great potential to facilitate sustainable consumption behaviors among consumers (Kai Qing et al., 2024).

1.2 Research Problem

Nowadays, fashion brands have adopted social media influencers as an important marketing strategy particularly in order to establish a connection with Generation Z consumers who frequently engage with social media. (Khan, 2025). Although Gen Z has increased awareness of environmental responsibility, Malaysian Gen Z consumers still continue to favour fast fashion in comparison to sustainable fashion (Masrikin Djou Massa & Deri Apriadi, 2025). As a result fast fashion in Malaysia is a major cause of environmental pollution because of high demand from customers because large volumes of discarded clothing end up in landfills (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The current Malaysia regulations aren't strong enough because they only focus on a few pollutants and ignore harmful chemicals used in making clothes, which leads to water pollution, chemical

contamination, and methane emissions from landfills (Ivy et al., 2024). Even though sustainable fashion has been promoted as a more eco-friendly option, Gen Z consumers' purchase intentions toward sustainable fashion brands still remain inconsistent (Icen Fragolia, 2025). This implies that influencer marketing effectiveness is largely driven by how consumers evaluate influencer credibility and how such evaluations affect their attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

Many previous studies (e.g., Anh Tai Doan, 2024; R. Francisco et al., 2025; Magwegwe & Shaik, 2024) examining consumer purchase intention have commonly applied behavioural theories such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which emphasize the role of attitude in predicting behavioural intention. The behavioural theory primarily focus on internal cognitive determinants of behavior, but they give less explicit attention to the role of external communication influences such as the credibility of social media influencers (Akther & Nur, 2022). In our research, Influencer credibility is important because consumers are more likely to trust and follow influencers who are seen as attractive, trustworthy, and knowledgeable (Sachu et al., 2025). Therefore, applying Source Credibility Theory is more suitable to understand how influencer credibility can shape Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion and, in turn, influence their purchase intentions.

Additionally, attitude itself functions as a key determinant of consumer behaviour and has been shown to significantly influence purchase intention. However, previous studies (e.g., Weismueller et al., 2020; Chaihanchai et al., 2024; Añaña & Barbosa, 2023) only examine the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention did not include attitude as a variable, focusing instead on direct effects. Yet, that research indicates a lack of understanding of how influencer credibility shapes consumers' internal evaluations before the purchase decisions are formed. Beside, in the context of sustainable consumption, Muda & Hamzah (2021) indicate that influencer credibility alone may not be sufficient to encourage sustainable purchasing behaviour without the presence of a positive attitude. The target population of our study is Gen Z, this is particularly relevant, as they tend to require a positive perception of sustainability and

environmental responsibility before engaging in the decision-making process (Ngo et al., 2024). By including attitude as an independent variable in our study can provide a more comprehensive view of how the dimensions of influencer source credibility affect Gen Z consumers' attitudes.

1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

As Malaysian Gen Z consumers become increasingly interested in sustainable fashion and the impact of social media continues to grow, this study seeks to examine how social media influencers impact consumers' attitudes and intentions to purchase sustainable fashion brands. The research objectives and question framework are designed to establish clarity, precision, and measurability for the survey.

1.3.1 Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between influencers' attractiveness and Gen Z attitude toward sustainable fashion brand in Malaysia
2. To examine the relationship between influencers' trustworthiness and Gen Z attitude toward sustainable fashion brand in Malaysia
3. To examine the relationship between influencers' expertise and Gen Z attitude toward sustainable fashion brand in Malaysia
4. To examine the relationship between Gen Z consumers' attitude toward sustainable fashion brands and their purchase intention

1.3.2 Research Questions

1. Does influencer attractiveness positively influence Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia?
2. Does influencer trustworthiness positively influence Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia?
3. Does influencer expertise positively influence Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia?
4. Does consumers' attitude toward sustainable fashion brands positively influence purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia?

1.4 Research Significance

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of social media influencers on Gen Z consumers' purchase intentions toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia . This study is important because it shows how social media influencers influence people's attitude towards sustainable fashion. Despite Generation Z being known for being environmentally conscious , many of them still favor fast fashion alternatives. This study can demonstrate how influencer marketing can be utilized to encourage more sustainable purchasing practices by identifying the factors that lead people to trust and follow influencers. Specifically , these findings can provide valuable insights towards sustainable fashion brands and marketers to create better marketing strategies and target Gen Z more effectively. At the same time , it can also help influencers understand their role in shaping positive environmental attitudes and encourage more sustainable buying habits.

This research enhances academic literature by utilizing Source Credibility Theory within the field of sustainable fashion. It provides insight into how the credibility of the source influence Gen Z's

attitudes and purchase decisions. However, there is still an attitude-behavior gap existing in which Gen Z customers may have favorable opinions on sustainable fashion, but they do not always convert these opinions into actual purchase intention. This is particularly relevant to Generation Z as they always express strong support for sustainability but at the same time they are struggling to align their values with their actual purchasing behavior. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on the impact of these credibility dimensions on Gen Z's attitudes toward sustainable fashion in Malaysia. Therefore, in order to address this gap, this study particularly investigates how these credibility factors affect Gen Z's attitudes and how those attitudes impact their purchase intentions in Malaysia.

1.5 Conclusion

This section concludes with a summary of the overall structure and purpose of the research question. The background, issues, questions, objectives, and significance of this section serve as a foundation for subsequent sections. The research model, literature review, and other topics will be discussed in subsequent sections.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Source Credibility Theory (SCT) will be applied in this study, and the literature review predicts Gen Z consumers' purchase intentions toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia. Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise are included as key dimensions of influencer

credibility, while Attitude toward sustainable fashion is also examined as an independent variable influencing purchase intention.

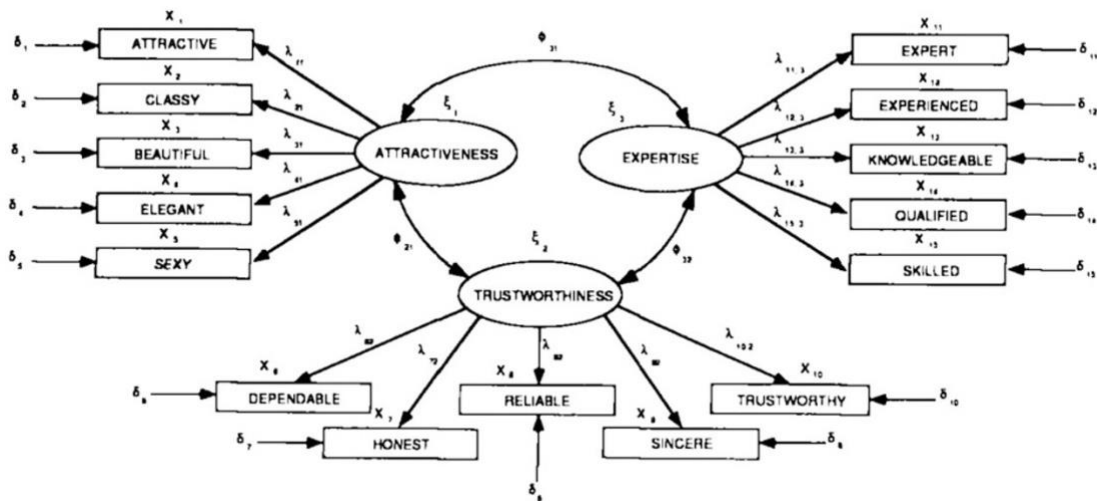
2.2 Underlying Theory

Hovland and Weiss (1951) introduced the Source Credibility Model, which clarified an approach in which specific characteristics of an information source influence the acceptance and adoption of its message by consumers. In general, Source Credibility Theory (SCT) is defined by three fundamental components which are expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. These dimensions are essential how individuals react and respond to information received (Ohanian, 1990 ; Serban, 2010). Attractiveness is the perceived appeal of a source, which is often characterised by attributes such as physical attractiveness, similarity or likeability (Mc Guire, 1985 ; Gavrilova & Shuleska, 2022). Trustworthiness is defined as the extent to which a source is perceived as honest and believable, highlighting that credibility is significantly influenced by the audience's interpretation of the endorser's fundamental motives (Banerjee et al., 2017) .According to Munnukka et al. (2016) and Gavrilova and Shuleska (2022), expertise is a fundamental element of the source credibility model. This model reflects the perceived knowledge, skill, or competence of a communicator and the degree to which they are considered a credible source of accurate and reliable information. The theory has been extensively utilized in advertising, marketing strategies, and communication studies to explain how source attributes affect customer attitudes and purchase intentions over the years (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999).

This study uses Source Credibility Theory to examine social media influencers and sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia, different from previous research that employs the Behaviour Theory to explain and affect consumer intentions regarding sustainable fashion purchases (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021; Brandão & Costa, 2021). In this context, influencer characteristics such as

expertise, entertainment value, trustworthiness, and information quality play a key role in building credibility, which in turn has a significant impact on customer attitudes, purchase intentions, and engagement (Saima & Khan, 2020 ; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ao et al., 2023; Pick, 2021). Moreover, Research consistently shows that consumers in Generation Z are heavily influenced by fashion-related content creators and social media influencers when they make purchase decision (Ge, 2024). This study aims to analyse the influence of credibility on attitudes towards sustainable fashion so Source Credibility Theory offers a useful theoretical framework for understanding how influencer credibility contributes to the awareness of sustainable consumption among Gen Z consumers in Malaysia.

Figure 2.1 The Ohanian Model of Source Credibility



Source from: (Byberg et al., 2015)

Table 2.1 Relevant SCT studies

Authors (Year)	Source Credibility Theory			Study Context
	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Expertise	

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Gen Z consumers' Purchase Intention Toward Sustainable Fashion Brands In Malaysia

Ohanian (1990)	✓	✓	✓	Celebrity endorsement
Mohd Suki (2014)	✓	✓	✓	Celebrity credibility
Rahim et al. (2016)		✓	✓	Green Purchase Intention
Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)	✓		✓	Instagram influencers
Lou & Yuan (2019)		✓		Social media influencers
Muda & Hamzah (2021)	✓	✓	✓	Influencer marketing in Malaysia
Bogoevska-Gavrilova and Ciunova-Shuleska (2022)	✓	✓	✓	Influencer Marketing
Roozen et al. (2024)		✓		Greenwashing and sustainability

2.3 Review of Variables

2.3.1 Dependent Variable - Purchase Intention

Purchase intention represents a consumer decision-making process that evaluates various factors influencing the likelihood of buying a specific brand or product (Akhtar, 2012). It shows a consumer's psychological preparedness to engage with a brand and can be seen as a behavioral decision influenced by personal evaluations (Wang & Yang, 2008). This psychological preparedness is closely linked to consumers' perceived requirements, attitudes, and perceptions of a product, which will influence their willingness to purchase or repurchase after evaluating the product's value (Keller, 2001; Madahi & Sukati, 2012). In addition, purchase intention plays a crucial role in the attitude–behaviour relationship, as it reflects the degree of effort a consumer is willing to exert to perform a consumption-related action (Bagozzi et al., 1990). Fundamentally, it can be defined as an individual's subjective likelihood of engaging in a particular behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In this study, purchase intention reflects consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable fashion products influenced by their attitudes toward sustainable fashion after being exposed to influencer credibility cues on social media platforms.

2.3.2 Independent Variable – Attractiveness

Attractiveness, as a core component of Source Credibility Theory (Patzner, 1983), is influenced by an individual's appearance and self-presentation (Ohanian, 1990; Joseph, 1982). It further encompasses perceived physical appeal, familiarity, likability, and perceived similarity to the source (McGuire, 1985). According to Erdogan (1999), attractiveness is defined as “an affection for the source due to physical appearance, behavior or other personal traits” (p. 40). Ohanian (1990) suggests that the attractiveness dimension of endorsers is reflected in characteristics such as elegant, classy, attractive, beautiful, or sexy. Individuals who are perceived as physically attractive

are frequently perceived as conscientious, polite, and friendly (Dion et al., 1972). Additionally, attractiveness helps create a strong bond between the source and the audience, meaning individuals are more likely to be persuaded when they perceive the source as likable (Kelman, 1961; Bogoevska-Gavrilova, 2023). In this study, attractiveness refers to the perceived physical appeal and overall presentation of social media influencers when promoting sustainable fashion products, which may influence Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

2.3.3 Independent Variable – Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, as defined by Ohanian (1991), refers to consumers' confidence in a source's ability to provide information in an objective and honest manner. Similarly, Hovland et al. (1953) explain that it reflects the extent to which an information source is believed to communicate accurate and truthful statements. In addition, Cho et al. (2009) describe trustworthiness as the degree to which a source is perceived as legitimate in expressing genuine feelings or evaluations. Prior research also suggests that trustworthiness plays a dominant role in the persuasion process (Friedman et al., 1978). Key indicators of a trustworthy source include honesty, reliability, credibility, and loyalty (Giffin, 1967; Bogoevska-Gavrilova, 2023). In the context of this study, trustworthiness refers to the perceived authenticity of fashion brands, which is reflected through transparency, consumer reviews, and ethical claims.

2.3.4 Independent Variable – Expertise

Hovland et al. (1953) define expertise as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions” (p. 21), while Cho et al. (2009) define it as the source's capacity to provide factual and reliable information. Furthermore, this concept integrates the communicator's competence quality, insights, and skills to make informed claims within a specific domain. (McCroskey & McCain, 1974; Serman & Sims, 2022). Related terms such as “authoritativeness” (McCroskey, 1966) and “qualification” (Berlo et al., 1969) emphasize that communicators must

demonstrate sufficient knowledge, experience, and expertise in their respective fields to establish credibility (McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Li & Yin, 2018). Expertise is often determined by factors such as the quality and quantity of information delivered, professional accomplishments, educational qualifications, and the reliability of an individual's judgments (Giffin, 1967; McGuire, 1968; Bogoevska-Gavrilova, 2023). In this study, influencer expertise refers to the perceived knowledge, skills, and experience of influencers in sustainable fashion. Expert influencers are seen as more competent, informed, and reliable, which will enhance their credibility and persuasiveness in shaping Gen Z consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions (McCroskey, 1966; Munnukka et al., 2016; Van der Waldt et al., 2011; Ohanian, 1990).

2.3.5 Independent Variable - Attitude Towards Sustainable Fashion

An attitude is an internal predisposition that can influence behaviour but is distinct from behaviour itself which reflects a person's positive or negative evaluation of performing a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 2001). The activation and shaping of attitudes are influenced by both thoughts and emotions. Individuals are more likely to resist change, process information carefully, experience stronger emotional reactions, and form distinct intentions about their behaviour when an attitude is personally significant, as it tends to be much stronger (Howe & Krosnick, 2017). Past research shows that the link between attitudes and behavior isn't always simple, as it is influenced by factors such as perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, past behavior, and habits. These factors are explained in the well-known Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of sustainability, consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion are generally positive, because their perceptions are being influenced by the growing awareness of environmental and social issues (Mandarić et al., 2022). Moreover, Zhang et al. (2021) indicate that cognitive and behavioural aspects of attitudes are generally consistent across cultures, but emotional responses vary more considerably and are frequently influenced by demographic factors. Building on this, Gen Z consumers in Malaysia are expected to exhibit similar knowledge and behavioural patterns when it comes to sustainable fashion, but their emotional responses may vary based on demographic factors.

2.4 Hypothesis Development

2.4.1 Attractiveness and Attitudes Toward Sustainable Fashion Brands

Attractiveness is about how people perceive someone's looks, style, and overall personality (Ohanian, 1990). Social media influencers who are seen as attractive naturally get attention from their followers, while at the same time keeping audiences engaged can help to create a more positive impression about the brand they are promoting (Erdogan, 1999). Aside from aesthetic appeal, attractiveness strengthen perception of credibility which can boost persuasiveness and generate positive customer responses, such as higher purchase intentions and favourable attitudes towards brands (Volkmer & Meißner, 2025; Kim & Park, 2023). Importantly, the effectiveness of attractiveness is contingent upon the product type and the perceived similarities between the endorser and the product, with the effect greater when customers perceive likeness or identification with the endorser (Flores-Zamora, 2022).

In the context of sustainable fashion, the role of attractiveness is a bit more complex compared with fast fashion as it don't have direct impact but it still plays an important role in helping influencers gain attention, build social influence, and encourage people to follow sustainable fashion (Sipos, 2024). Since social media influencers act as key trendsetters for Gen Z, their attractiveness can be strategically used to spark interest and gradually shape more positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands (Israfilzade & Hlushchenko, 2024). Besides, social media influencers are often viewed as relatable and trustworthy individuals who recommend products to their followers. By combining credibility, attractiveness, and a personal connection with their audience, they can build trust, increase brand awareness, and encourage stronger engagement across social media platforms (Gautam & Jaitly, 2021; Christine J. Concepcion, 2025). Core influencer attributes are consistently linked to stronger consumer engagement, with entertainment value often having the greatest impact as it keeps audiences more interested and entertained (Ao et al., 2023). This suggests that attractive service influencers tend to enhance customer satisfaction, improve attitudes toward brand, and increase consumers' purchase intentions (Li et al., 2022).

H1: There is a positive relationship between influencer attractiveness and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.

2.4.2 Trustworthiness and Attitudes Toward Sustainable Fashion Brands

Trustworthiness in our study to the extent to which a social media influencer is perceived as honest, reliable, and credible by the consumers (Ahmed, 2024). Trustworthiness is an essential part of source credibility because consumers and followers are more likely to accept and be influenced by information from sources they trust (Pop et al., 2022). Moreover, influencers that exhibit transparency and authenticity are more effective in shaping positive consumer perceptions in the context of social media marketing (Khalfallah & Keller, 2025). According to the theory, trustworthiness plays an important role in persuasiveness of communication by increasing the believability of the message for the receiver (Andrews et al., 2025). Thus, influencers are viewed as trustworthy consumers will be more likely to treat their recommendations as genuine rather than purely marketing promotional. This is particularly important in our study of sustainable fashion as customers place a high priority on concerns like ethical sourcing, environmental effect, and transparency (Dangelico et al., 2022).

Besides that, trustworthy influencers can reduce skepticism and uncertainty surrounding sustainability claims, especially those that are often questioned due to concerns about greenwashing, making trustworthiness particularly relevant in the context of sustainable consumption (Gerrath et al., 2024). By offering honest and consistent messages, influencers can enhance their followers' confidence in sustainable fashion brands (Londoño-Bedoya et al., 2025). As a result, consumers will be more willing to develop positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands endorsed by trustworthy influencers. In addition, value congruence between influencers and their audiences plays a crucial role in building trust because shared values will strengthen relatability and credibility (Londoño-Bedoya et al., 2025). This trust subsequently increases consumers' purchase intentions as well.

H2: There is a positive relationship between influencer trustworthiness and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.

2.4.3 Expertise and Attitudes Toward Sustainable Fashion Brands

Expertise in our study to the extent to which a social media influencer is perceived as knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced by the consumers (Li & Yin, 2018). Expertise is an essential part of source credibility as it can enhance the credibility and persuasiveness of the information shared by the influencer (Ismagilova et al., 2020). According to the theory, people who are perceived as experts will be more persuasive as their opinions are seen as more accurate, reliable and trustworthy by the audience (Løhre et al., 2024). Consumers are more likely to trust influencers who have a high level of knowledge particularly when they are seeking guidance, advice, or recommendations related to specific topics (Chen et al., 2024). As the study topic sustainable fashion involves detailed knowledge about environmental impact, ethical sourcing, material sustainability, and production processes (Rahaman et al., 2024). If the influencers who are expertise can better educate their audience. At the same time, it not only increases the perceived reliability of the influencer but also boosts the communication's overall efficiency.

According to research, influencers' expertise, authenticity, and homophily play a crucial role in fostering follower trust, as consumers are more inclined to trust information when influencers exhibit expertise and when the endorsed brands are viewed as credible and responsible (Kim & Kim, 2021). As trust also shapes consumer confidence, as moral considerations may outweigh performance-related information especially when consumers are familiar with the brand (Johnson & Rickard, 2022). By having trust, consumers can reduce uncertainty and increase confidence toward sustainable fashion. As a result, expert influencers can help consumers to develop positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands.

H3: There is a positive relationship between influencer expertise and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.

2.4.4 Attitudes Toward Sustainable Fashion Brands and Purchase Intention

Attitude is a psychological concept that is influenced by a variety of elements, such as emotional attachment to any object, beliefs and values, and cognitive evaluation (Khan et al., 2022). In our study, attitude refers to an individual's overall evaluation, feeling, or perception toward sustainable fashion brands (Muhammad Yaqin & Yasin, 2024). In consumer behaviour theory such as Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude plays a critical role in influencing decision-making process because it reflects how positively or negatively a consumer perceives a brand (Khan et al., 2022). Bechler et al. (2021) state that a positive attitude often leads to stronger behavioral outcomes. The behavioral outcomes include purchase intention, which increases the likelihood of actual purchases of sustainable fashion brands (Amanda & Marsasi, 2024). It also indicates that consumers who have positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly are more likely to support sustainable brands. A positive attitude towards sustainable fashion is usually shaped by pro-social and long-term values, environmental knowledge, education and supportive social norms (Maleknia & Zamani, 2025; García-Salirrosas et al., 2024).

According to behavioural theories attitudes are strong predictors of behavioural intention (Horcajo & Mateos, 2023). So when consumers have developed a positive attitude toward sustainable fashion brands, they are more willing to translate these attitudes into purchase intentions as positive evaluations are usually the stronger driver for risk behaviors (Elliott et al., 2014).

H4: There is a positive relationship between consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands and purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia.

2.5 Research Framework

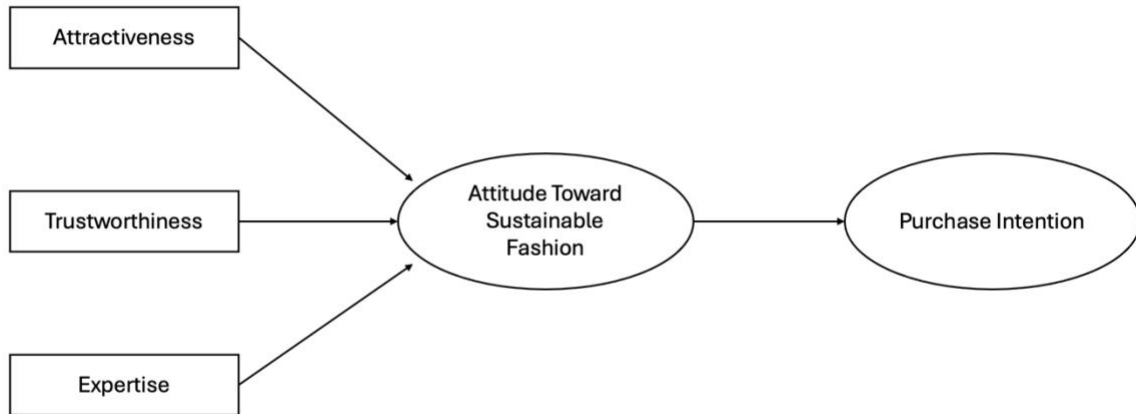


Figure 2.5.1

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology applied in this study, which consists of the research design, sampling design, questionnaire construction, data collection, and data analysis methods.

3.1 Research Design

According to Jansen (2023), research design is an overarching plan or strategy that guides a study from its beginning to the final stage of data analysis. It acts as a blueprint that specifies the procedures for collecting, measuring, interpreting, and analysing data while ensuring reliability, validity, and consistency. This study employs a descriptive research design, with the main objective of analyzing the relationship between social media influencers and Malaysian Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands and their purchase intentions. This design captures the characteristics and action snapshots of the target audience and allows the researchers to collect the quantitative data that reflect the respondents' current cognition, behavior, and opinion in natural settings. It is key to understanding its overall stance on sustainable fashion choice (Munther et al., 2024). Furthermore, the descriptive research design is widely applied in marketing and the consumer behavior studies due to its ability to systematically collect the factual information and attitude data from a large sample of respondents. In this research design we aim to explore how Generation Z perceives the credibilities of the social media influencers, and these all perceptions how to impact their attitudes toward the sustainable fashion and subsequent purchase intentions. Overall, the descriptive research designs need to ensure that the collected data

are substantive meaning, relevance, and statistical analyzability, thereby effectively achieving the research objectives and resolving the research questions (Rusdian et al., 2024).

3.2 Sampling Design

3.2.1 Target Population

In this research it is focused on the target population is between the ages of 18 and 28 Malaysian Generation Z. According to Tjiptono et al. (2020), the statistics in 2020 showed that the largest population segment in Malaysia was Generation Z, it is accounting for 29% of the total population. Moreover, Generation Z are the digital natives that who are spending an average of 8 hours daily on social media, it is forming the world's largest primary social media user group. They are estimated to remain the most dominant social media consumer demographic in the future. The Malaysian population was ranked sixth as the country spending the most time on the Internet, with 89.6% of the population using the Internet, the majority of which is Generation Z (Chin et al., 2024). Jílková & Králová (2020) stated that compared to other populations, Gen Z consumers perceive e-commerce services as more convenient and are increasingly used to new payment methods. Besides that, Generation Z's as a digital native that are high connectivity and their strong concern for sustainability issues make them an ideal to research subject for studying sustainable fashion consumption.

3.2.2 Sampling Technique

In this study, it was adopted the non-probability purposive sampling to select respondents. According to research by Farid Shamsudin et al. (2024), the purposive sampling is particularly useful when need to examine the specific populations or phenomena, because it is permitting the

selection of information-rich cases. The method that enables the targeted inclusion of individuals who that is meet the specific characteristics it is aligned with the research objectives. The purposive sampling, also known as the judgmental sampling that is especially applied in this study, which are focuses on Malaysian Gen Z consumers and their attitudes toward the sustainable fashion. Therefore, not all individuals will be able to contribute the required insights. It is only those who fulfill the criteria of being Gen Z aged between 18 to 28 and being active social media users who are considered appropriate participants, as they are represented the core target consumer group. Through implemented the purposive sampling, the research that was ensures collected data is meaningful and relevant to the context, thus boosting its effectiveness (Qualtrics, 2021). This approach also offers practical advantages due to Malaysia's lack of a comprehensive sampling framework for Gen Z consumers. Using the digital platforms that like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp groups to engage Generation Z populations enables the efficient and cost-effective data collection (Statista, 2023). These findings further validate the effectiveness of this approach are accurately capturing the views of Malaysian Gen Z consumers who actively participate in social media and sustainable fashion.

3.2.3 Sample Size

Faul et al. (2020) explain that G*Power was used to calculate the sample size, as it is a common tool for statistical power analysis. It calculates the minimum sample size needed to detect an effect at a certain power level, ensuring the study results are reliable and valid. Based on Cohen (1988), this study uses a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.80, which are commonly used standards in social science research (Hair et al., 2022). G Power analysis showed that the minimum sample size needed to achieve acceptable statistical power was 85 respondents. Therefore, this study collected the valid responses for the final analysis that exceeded the minimum threshold recommended by G Power (Kassab et al., 2023).

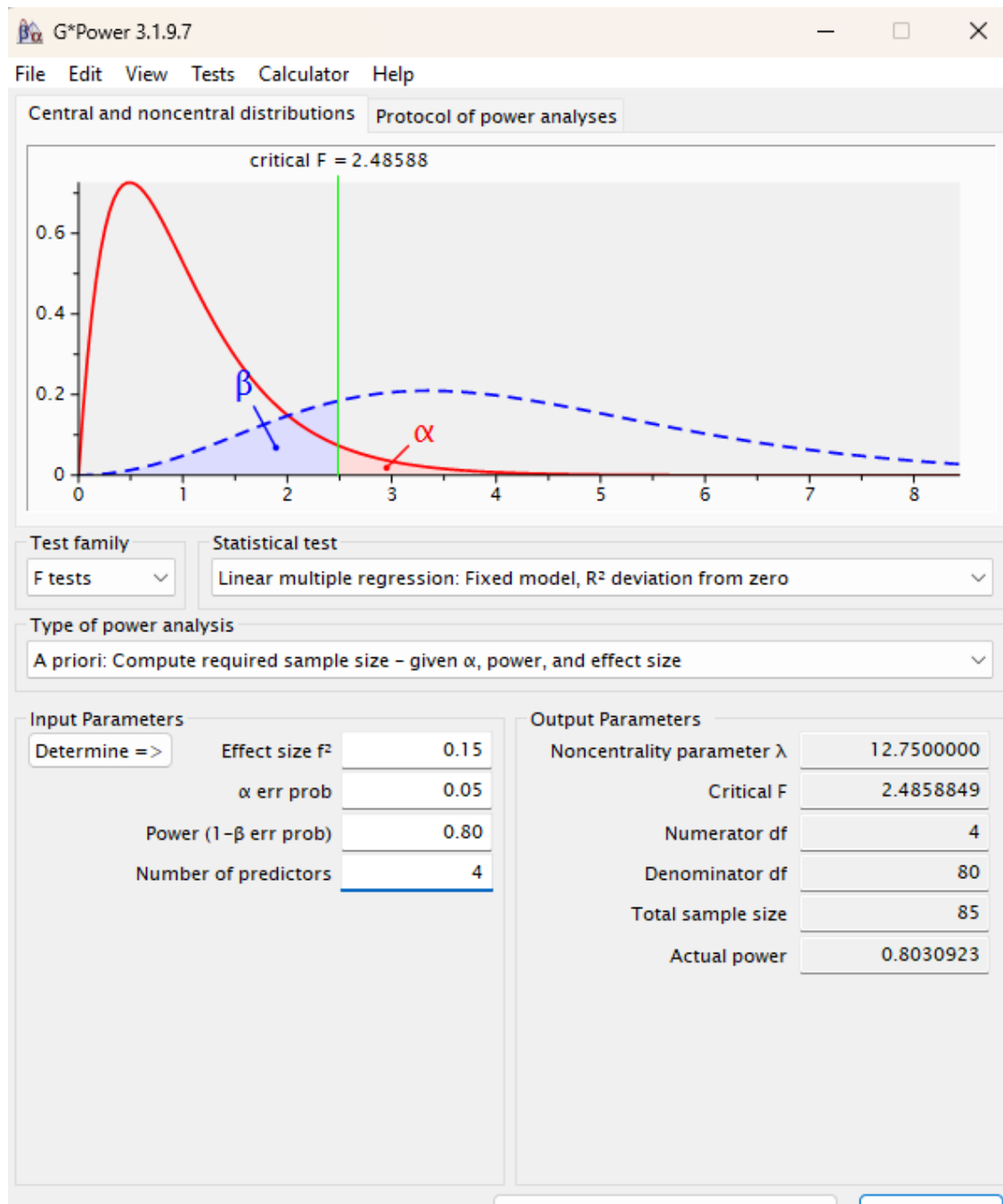


Figure 3.1 Generated using G Power

3.3 Data Collection Method

3.3.1 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire design consists of A and B sections, which include a series of statements related to the research hypotheses. Section A collects data on respondents' demographics using both screening questions and closed-ended questions. Section B lists all descriptions of items used to evaluate four independent variables (IV) and one dependent variable (DV). Respondents must select the most appropriate response from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” For example: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.3.1.1 Pre-Screening Section

1) Were you born between 1997 to 2012 ?
· Yes · No
2) Do you agree this is the definition of sustainable fashion? Definition : Sustainable fashion refers to the design, production, distribution, and consumption of clothing that prioritizes environmental responsibility, ethical practices, and social equity, ensuring minimal harm to the planet while respecting human rights and fair labour conditions (Henninger et al., 2016).
· Yes · No

3) Had you purchased sustainable fashion brand/products before ?
· Yes · No

3.3.1.2 Section A: Demographic Profile Question

1) Gender
· Female · Male
2) Age
· 18 to 19 years old · 20 to 21 years old · 22 to 23 years old · 24 to 25 years old · 26 to 28 years old
3) Monthly personal Income/allowance

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· <RM1000 · RM1000-RM2000 · RM2000-RM3000 · RM3000-RM4000 · RM4000-RM5000 · RM5000-RM6000 · >RM6000
4) Educational Level
· Primary · Secondary · Diploma · Bachelor Degree · Others (Please Specify):
5) Ethnicity
· Malay · Chinese · Indian · Others (Please Specify):

3.3.1.3 Section B: Dependent and Independent Variable Questions

Dependent Variables	Items	Measurement Item	References
Purchase Intention	P1	I intend to buy a sustainable fashion brand that is recommended by an influencer on a social media platform in the near future.	(Adel Sitorus et al., 2024)
	P2	I would consider buying the sustainable fashion brand featured from the influencer's social media platform.	
	P3	My willingness to buy sustainable fashion brands featured from influencers' social media platforms is high.	
	P4	I intend to spend more money on sustainable fashion brands that are recommended by influencers on social media platforms in the near future.	
Independent Variables	Items	Measurement Item	References
Attractiveness	A1	The social media influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews is good looking.	(Adel Sitorus et al., 2024)
	A2	The social media influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews is attractive.	
	A3	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on a social media platform is sexy.	

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	A4	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on a social media platform is elegant.	
	A5	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on a social media platform is glamorous.	
Independent Variables	Items	Measurement Item	References
Trustworthiness	T1	The social media influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews is dependable.	(Adel Sitorus et al., 2024)
	T2	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on social media platform is honest.	
	T3	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on social media platform is reliable.	
	T4	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on social media platform is sincere.	
	T5	The influencer who provides sustainable fashion product reviews on social media platform is trustworthy.	
Independent Variables	Items	Measurement Item	References
Expertise	E1	The influencer who reviews sustainable fashion products on social media platform is experienced in sustainable fashion products.	(Adel Sitorus et al., 2024)

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	E2	The social media influencer who reviews sustainable fashion products is an expert in this field.	
	E3	The influencer who reviews sustainable fashion products is knowledgeable in sustainable fashion products.	
	E4	The influencer who reviews sustainable fashion products on social media platform is qualified to offer sustainable fashion advice.	
	E5	The influencer who reviews sustainable fashion products on social media is truly committed to sustainable fashion.	
Independent Variables	Items	Measurement Item	References
Attitude	AT1	I think the sustainable fashion that reviews by the social media influencer is interesting.	(Adel Sitorus et al., 2024)
	AT2	I think the sustainable fashion that reviews by the social media influencer is pleasant.	
	AT3	I think the sustainable fashion that reviews by the social media influencer is likeable.	
	AT4	I have a favourite attitude about the sustainable fashion that is reviewed by the social media influencer.	

3.3.2 Primary Data

The data collection responsibility was starting after defined the research problem and outlining the research design. Data collection is a key part of research as basically information that has been systematically designed to address research questions. The primary data that is the data are original and fresh, and collected for the first time. Primary data in behavioral science is typically gathered through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and database searches (Mazhar et al., 2021). Hence, we are employed the Google Forms to create our questionnaire, a user-friendly survey tool. Google Forms automatically gathers responses into a structured format, enabling real-time data collection management for analysis (Sandhya et al., 2020). Furthermore, this approach was matched in marketing and consumer behavior research with current trends, with online surveys that serving as a primary data collection method due to their efficiency and ability to capture responses from geographically diverse populations (TrungHo47, 2025).

3.3.3 Pre-Test

According to Hashim et al. (2022), Pre-test is an important part of the quantitative research, it highlights areas for improvement in designing effective survey questionnaires. Not only that, implement the pretesting is crucial for ensured the smooth conducted of actual data collection in research. Additionally, pre-test that also can helps the researchers to determine the surface validity and content validity of questionnaires, and ensures the questions that are accurately represent research objectives and remain relevant to the subject matter (Mason et al., 2020). This approach was assisted in simplifying questionnaires by removed the unnecessary, similar, or ambiguous content, making them more concise and efficient. Pre-testing procedures are usually examined by academic specialists to ensure the final instrument meets research requirements while maintaining high quality (Hashim et al., 2022). Before pilot testing, we will perform cognitive evaluations with 5 eligible Gen Z participants to explore how respondents interpret each item, operational

instructions, and the 1–5 Likert scale, while identifying comprehension issues and time burdens. Then, following current best practices, we will improve the scales and questionnaires before piloting to enhance content validity and respondent comprehension (Hair et al., 2022; Saunders et al., 2023).

3.3.4 Pilot Study

Before conducting the main research, researchers should first undertake a small-scale preliminary study, like a pilot study, that also known as a feasibility study. Its main purpose is to test the feasibility of the main research or improve the research design. Pilot studies there are playing a crucial role in designed research methodologies and proposals before the full-scale implementation of a research project. Additionally, pilot study is used to test research design and assess feasibility, resources, timeline, and cost before the main study. Kunselman (2024) indicates that the aim of pilot studies is to reduce research errors and identify problem areas that may impact the results' accuracy or prevent the study's successful completion. Therefore, a Google Form Questionnaire survey should be conducted following the pre-test to obtain direct and immediate feedback. An appropriate sample size is essential for ensuring reliable and valid results so 30 participants are recommended for the pilot study (Bujang et al., 2024).

3.4 Proposed Data Analysis Tool

3.4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is one of the most important methods for the statistical data analysis. It involves describing, presenting, or summarizing data points in a constructive manner to identify patterns consistent across all data conditions. Not only that, descriptive analysis can help

researchers reach findings about data distribution, identify correlations between variables, uncover input errors and outliers, and prepare for subsequent statistical analysis. According to Loeb (2017), the research used the descriptive analysis to provide a comprehensive overview of respondent characteristics and key research variables. This methodology fully presents the population profiles of Malaysian Gen Z respondents that includes age, gender, educational attainment, and social media usage patterns. Moreover, descriptive analysis enables researchers to identify the overall trends, patterns of concentration, and variability within the data, establishing a foundation for subsequent analytical approaches aimed at exploring the relationships among study variables.

3.4.2 Inferential Analysis

According to Dabas (2013) studies, inferential statistics are applied to evaluate whether the pattern differences identified through descriptive analysis are likely to be due to chance. Each research question is systematically analyzed, delving deeply into the field of inferential statistics, including hypothesis testing, regression analysis, subsequent testing, and effect size analysis. Therefore, the researchers first implemented reliability tests to ensure the collection of reliable data (Ganesha & Aithal, 2022).

3.4.3 SmartPLS Software

SmartPLS is a widely recognized statistical tool to analyze the complex relationships among latent constructs. SmartPLS is useful for exploratory and predictive analysis because it does not assume data normality and can handle small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022). SmartPLS allows researchers to evaluate both the measurement and structural models, ensuring reliability and validity before testing hypotheses (Henseler et al., 2015). Not only that, SmartPLS is a flexible tool that allows the inclusion of both reflective and formative measurement models, making it appropriate for research involving multiple variables and indicators. The SmartPLS software also offers advanced

analytical techniques like bootstrapping, mediation analysis, and moderation analysis, which are used to enhance the stability of the research findings (Sarstedt et al., 2021). So, the primary data analysis tool in this study adopts SmartPLS software to evaluate the proposed research model and test the hypothesized relationships (Wong, 2013).

3.4.4 Measurement Model Assessment

In SmartPLS, the measurement model is assessed first to examine the relationship between latent constructs and their indicators. It is important to ensure that the measurement items can accurately represent the construct before proceeding with structural model analysis. The assessment in this study is conducted to use SmartPLS to facilitate the evaluation of the complex models in PLS-SEM. Moreover, any inadequacy may affect the validity of subsequent hypothesis tests, so a well-established measurement model is important. The assessment covers indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022).

The reliability of an indicator is assessed by the extent to which it reflects its underlying construct. Furthermore, it is assessed to examine the external loadings, and values of 0.708 or higher are viewed as acceptable. However, the indicators with the loadings below 0.40 should be excluded (Hair et al., 2022). The internal consistency reliability indicates the degree of consistency among the various measures of a construct. In PLS-SEM analysis, the composite reliability (CR) is preferred over Cronbach's alpha due to its higher accuracy in estimating reliability. CR value between 0.70 and 0.95 is considered acceptable, it is indicating that the items reliably measure the same underlying construct (Sarstedt, Ringle, & Franklin Hair, 2021).

In addition, convergent validity examines how well a construct explains the variance in its indicators. AVE is used to evaluate convergent validity, where values above 0.50 confirm that the construct explains sufficient variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2022). Beside, discriminant validity checks whether a construct is different from other constructs in the model. The Heterotrait-

Monotrait (HTMT) ratio is applied as a more reliable criterion for this study. HTMT values were below the threshold of 1.0, indicating that discriminant validity was established (Hair et al., 2021).

3.4.5 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model assessment in the PLS-SEM analysis is the final step. Once the measurement model is reliable and valid, the next step is to assess the structural model to test the relationships between latent variables (Kang & Ahn, 2021). This study analysis adopts SmartPLS, which allows the evaluation of complex causal relationships in the research framework. Furthermore, the structural model assessment was focused on several key criteria that included collinearity issues, path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2) .

Firstly, collinearity is one step to ensure that there are no high correlations among the predictor variables' constructs, which could result in incorrect results. So, the study analyzes the assessment using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). If the values are below 5, it shows that collinearity is not a key issue (Zia et al., 2025). According to the research of Hair et al. (2017), the bootstrapping method was used to evaluate the path coefficients which indicated the significance, direction, and magnitude of hypothesized relationships for values ranging from -1 to +1. Then, t-values and p-values were used to evaluate the statistical support for each hypothesis. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is then evaluated to assess the explanatory power of the model. The research field determines that R^2 values of 0.75 and 0.50 and 0.25 represent strong to moderate and weak relationships between variables.

3.5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, in this chapter 3 that was provided a comprehensive overview of the research tools adopted in this research.

CHAPTER 4: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 discusses the data collected from the questionnaire survey. There were 124 valid responses, and any invalid responses were removed. SmartPLS 4.1.1.4 was used for data analysis.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

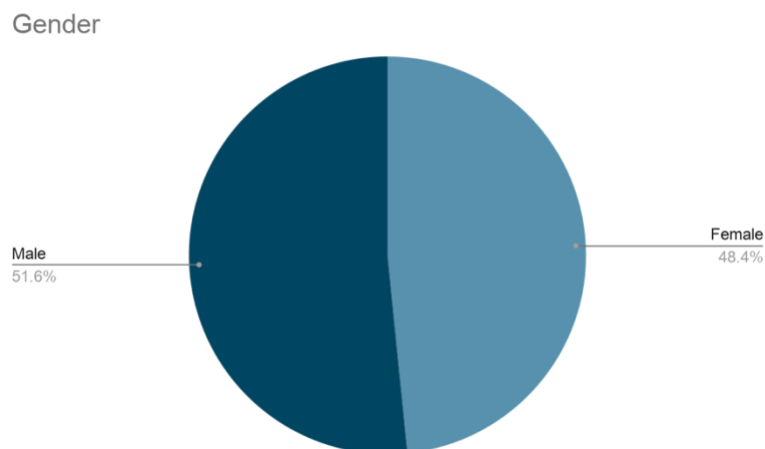


Figure 4.1 Generated using Mircosoft Excel

Among the respondents, 48.4% were female ($N = 60$) and 51.6% were male ($N = 64$).

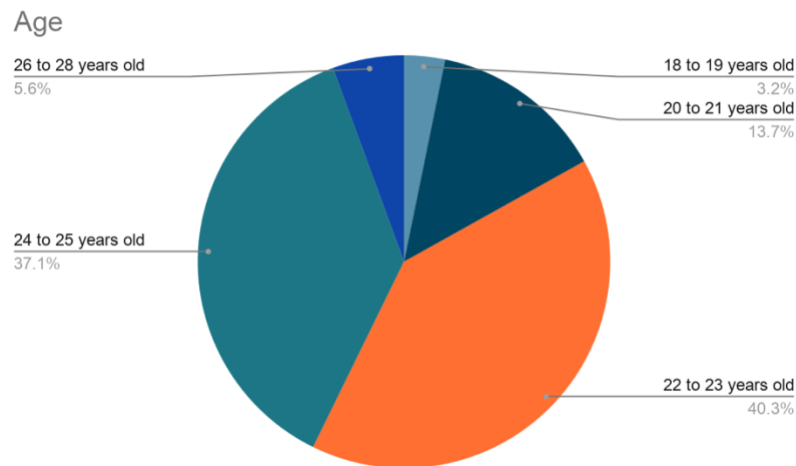


Figure 4.2 Generated using Mircosoft Excel

In this study, 3.2% of respondents (N=4) were aged from 18 to 19 years old, 13.7% (N=17) were aged from 20 to 21 years old, 40.3% (N=50) were aged from 22 to 23 years old, 37.1% (N=46) were aged from 24 to 25 years old, and 5.6% (N=7) were aged from 26 to 28 years old.

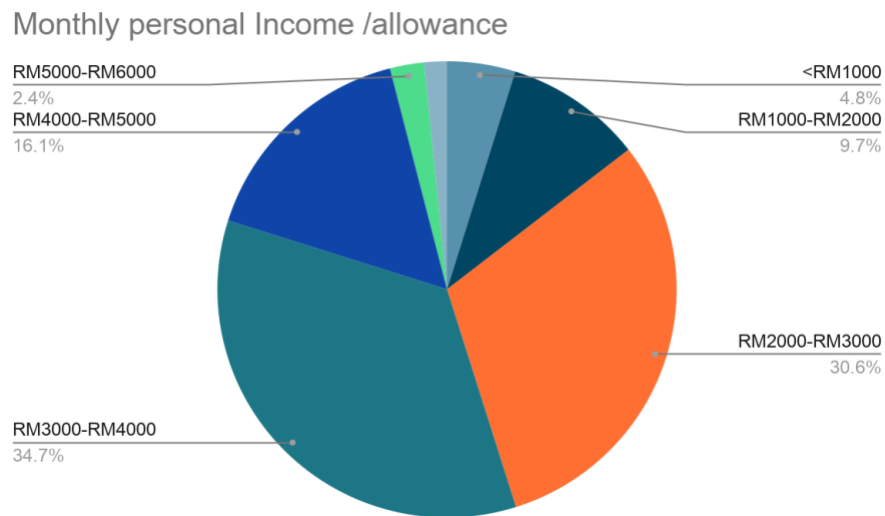


Figure 4.3 Generated using Mircosoft Excel

Out of 124 respondents, 4.8% (N = 6) earned below RM1000, 9.7% (N = 12) earned RM1000–RM2000, 30.6% (N = 38) earned RM2000–RM3000, 34.7% (N = 43) earned RM3000–RM4000, 16.1% (N = 20) earned RM4000–RM5000, 2.4% (N = 3) earned RM5000–RM6000, and 1.6% (N = 2) earned above RM6000.

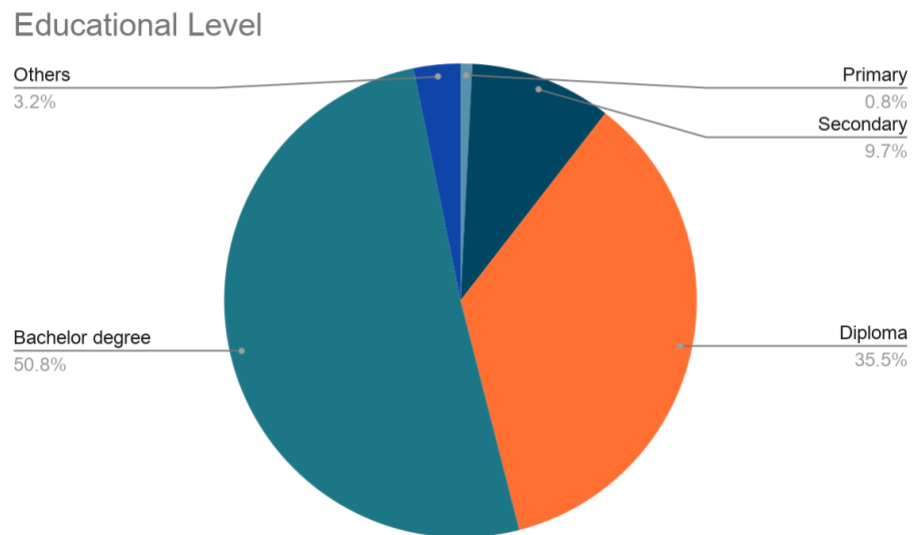


Figure 4.4 Generated using Microsoft Excel

For education level, 0.8% (N = 1) had primary education, 9.7% (N = 12) had secondary education, 35.5% (N = 44) had a diploma, 50.8% (N = 63) had a bachelor's degree, and 3.2% (N = 4) had other qualifications.

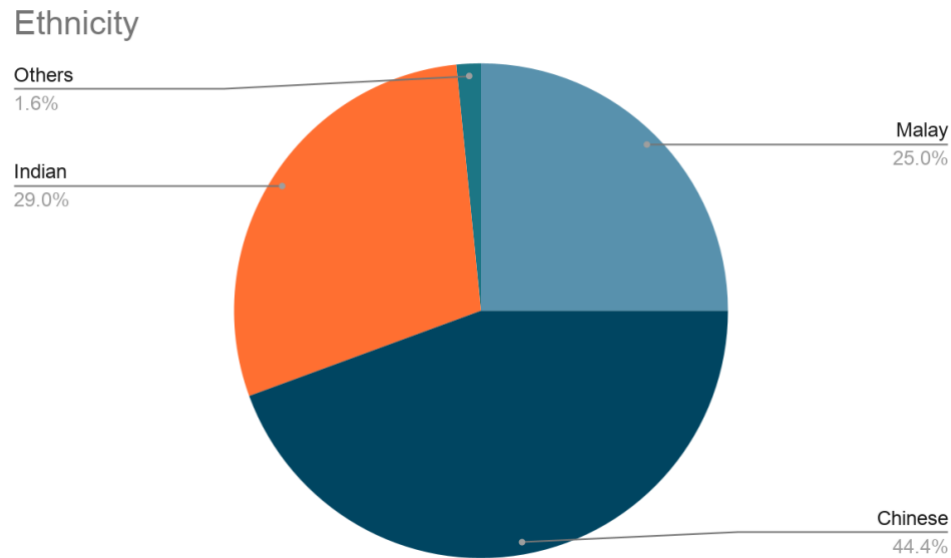


Figure 4.5 Generated using Mircosoft Excel

Furthermore, 25% of respondents (N=31) are Malay, 44.4% (N=55) are Chinese, 29% (N=36) are Indian, and 1.6% (N=2) are other races.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Table 4:1

Measurement Model Result

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	CR>0.7	AVE	Convergent Validity (AVE>0.5)
Attractiveness (A)	A1	0.703	0.795	Yes	0.541	Yes
	A2	0.729				

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	A3	0.843				
	A4	0.751				
	A5	0.636				
Expertise (E)	E1	0.759	0.784	Yes	0.534	Yes
	E2	0.784				
	E3	0.742				
	E4	0.684				
	E5	0.682				
Trustworthiness (T)	T1	0.784	0.782	Yes	0.530	Yes
	T2	0.745				
	T3	0.760				
	T4	0.700				
	T5	0.642				
Attitude (AT)	AT1	0.767	0.781	Yes	0.603	Yes
	AT2	0.744				
	AT3	0.813				
	AT4	0.780				
Purchase Intention (P)	P1	0.843	0.853	Yes	0.691	Yes
	P2	0.856				
	P3	0.843				
	P4	0.783				

External loadings were used to assess reliability, with most items exceeding 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021; Mohd Dzin & Lay, 2021). However, a few items with loadings between 0.60 and 0.70 were kept because they are appropriate in exploratory study. According to Mohd Dzin and Lay (2021), indicators with loadings above 0.60 can be kept if CR and AVE meet the required levels. Composite reliability should exceed 0.70, while the average variance extracted (AVE) should be above 0.50.

In exploratory studies, composite reliability (CR) values are often expected to be between 0.60 and 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). However, 0.70 is usually seen as the minimum acceptable level for good reliability (Yusuf Haji-Othman & Mohd, 2022). As all the CR values in this study are above 0.70, the internal consistency is considered good.

Convergent validity is measured using AVE, and the acceptable level is at least 0.50 (Hair et al., 2021). Because all AVE values in this study are above 0.50, it concludes that convergent validity has been established.

Table 4:2

***Discriminant
Validity***

	A	AT	T	P
A				
AT	0.918			
E	0.898	0.904		
P	0.886	0.909	0.922	
T	0.979	0.949	0.983	0.840

The HTMT values were assessed to evaluate discriminant validity. All HTMT values were below 1.0, showing that discriminant validity was achieved (Hair et al., 2021).

4.3 Structural model assessment

Table 4:3

Structural Model & Testing Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P - value	Decisions
H1	Attractiveness-> Attitude	0.318	0.092	3.471	0.001	Supported
H2	Trustworthiness -> Attitude	0.312	0.098	3.176	0.002	Supported
H3	Expertise -> Attitude	0.243	0.112	2.180	0.029	Supported
H4	Attitude -> Purchase Intention	0.742	0.061	12.225	0.000	Supported

The structural model's evaluation relied on path coefficients and p-values, with a significance threshold set at 0.05, p-values below this value suggest a statistically significant relationship, thereby lending support to the proposed hypothesis. As presented in Table 4.3, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise each exerted significant positive influences on Attitude, with p-values of 0.001, 0.002, and 0.029 respectively. Attitude significantly and positively affects Purchase Intention ($p < 0.001$). In SmartPLS, a t-value greater than 1.96 indicates significance. Based on the results in Table 4.3, all relationships are significant as all t-values exceed 1.96 so all relationships in the model are significant.

Table 4:4

Collinearity Issue

	VIF
A1	1.592
A2	1.343
A3	2.209
A4	1.594
A5	1.384
AT1	1.584
AT2	1.398
AT3	1.707
AT4	1.542
E1	1.538
E2	1.667
E3	1.673
E4	1.406
E5	1.390
P1	2.032
P2	2.109
P3	2.022
P4	1.652
T1	1.661
T2	1.574
T3	1.601
T4	1.473
T5	1.297

The VIF is used to quantify collinearity problems. A problematic collinearity issue is indicated by a number greater than 5 (Hair et al., 2021). Based on table 4.4, there is no collinearity problem, as all of the results' values are less than 5.

Table 4:5

Coefficient of Determination

	Adjusted R - squared
AT	0.627
P	0.547

The results show that Attitude (AT) has an R^2 value of 0.627, indicating that 62.7% of Gen Z have a positive attitude toward sustainable fashion brands explained by attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. In addition, purchase intention (P) has an R^2 value of 0.547, meaning that 54.7% of Gen Z has Purchase Intention toward sustainable fashion brand is explained by attitude.

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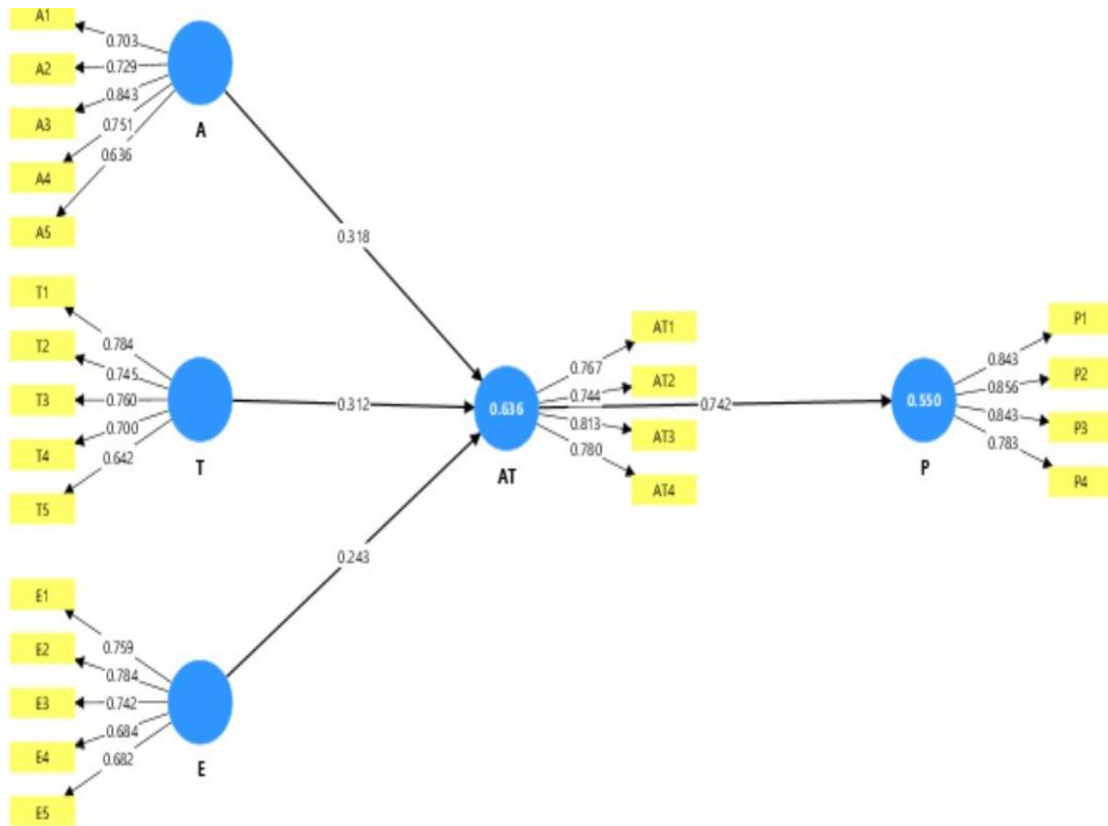


Figure 4.6 Model in SMART PLS

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

5.0 Introduction

This research provides a summary of key findings based on the research objectives and hypotheses. This research examines how influencer attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise affect Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands. It establishes how these views impact Malaysian shoppers when they decide to buy products. The research outcomes lead to practical and theoretical applications, which this chapter presents, along with an assessment of research method limitations. Proposed research directions will advance our understanding of influencer marketing and eco-friendly product purchasing behavior.

5.1 Summary of Statistical Analysis

The results of all hypothesis tests (H1, H2, H3, H4) have been summarized and are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: *Results of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis		Results
H1	There is a positive relationship between influencer attractiveness and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia..	Supported

H2	There is a positive relationship between influencer trustworthiness and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.	Supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between influencer expertise and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.	Supported
H4	There is a positive relationship between consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands and purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia.	Supported

5.2 Discussions of Major Findings

5.2.1 There is a positive relationship between influencer attractiveness and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.

The results show a positive relationship between social media influencers' attractiveness and consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands, thereby supporting H1. This result confirms the theoretical proposition of Source Credibility Theory, which identifies attractiveness as a predictor of persuasive communication (Ohanian, 1990). Similar to previous studies (e.g., Erdogan, 1999; Volkmer & Meißner, 2025), this research shows that more attractive and influential influencers create more positive consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion. These studies indicate that having engaging brand ambassadors can enhance consumer interaction and foster positive brand perception. As suggested by Kelman (1961), identification with an attractive source strengthens persuasive impact, especially when consumers perceive similarity or likeability. In the sustainable fashion context, while attractiveness may not directly drive purchase behaviour, it plays an important role in generating initial interest and shaping favourable evaluations toward

sustainable fashion brands in generating an initial interest and fostering the positive cognitive and emotional evaluations. These research findings reinforce the role of attractiveness as an entry-level persuasion tool and foster that the positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion among consumers.

5.2.2 There is a positive relationship between influencer trustworthiness and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.

The findings support H2, indicating a positive link between influencer trustworthiness and consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands. The result is consistent with a foundational study by Hovland and Weiss (1951) and Ohanian (1990), who emphasized trustworthiness as a core determinant of information acceptance. Trust is crucial in sustainability due to concerns about greenwashing and exaggerated environmental claims (e.g., Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). When influencers are seen as honest, reliable, and authentic, their endorsements are more credible, which reduces doubt and improves attitudes toward sustainable fashion. Previous research shows that authenticity and transparency can significantly improve consumer attitudes and brand loyalty in sustainable markets (e.g., Neumann et al., 2021; Kapoor et al., 2022). This study confirms that credibility serves as a decisive factor in shaping positive attitudes among Malaysian Gen Z consumers, particularly within a market environment where consumers are increasingly critical of sustainability claims. The results support the hypothesis that trustworthiness increases persuasion by enhancing the perception of authenticity and reliability.

5.2.3 There is a positive relationship between influencer expertise and Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands in Malaysia.

The findings support H3, showing a positive link between influencer expertise and consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands. This finding aligns with expertise as the perceived knowledge, skills, and authority of communicators (e.g., Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990). Previous research emphasizes that expertise can enhance informational persuasion, especially in product categories that require higher involvement and specialized knowledge (e.g., Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; An et al., 2024). The sustainable fashion industry often involves many complex factors, which include ethical sourcing, environmental impact, and sustainable production methods. The social media influencers who displayed expertise were more likely to reduce the consumers' uncertainty and enhance the trust in the information that was related of the sustainable. Evidence further shows that influencers' expertise and knowledge positively influence consumer engagement and brand attitudes (e.g., Chen et al., 2024; Saskara & Achmad, 2024). This study applies these findings to Malaysia's Gen Z audience, demonstrating that professional expertise serves as a powerful signal of credibility. It not only provides authenticity for sustainability claims but also strengthens consumers' positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands.

5.2.4 There is a positive relationship between consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands and purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia.

The findings show a positive link between consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands and purchase intention, supporting H4. The finding is consistent with existing behavioral theories which view attitudes as a key determinant of behavioral intention (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, prior research in the field of sustainable consumption indicates that a positive attitude toward sustainable fashion can significantly enhance purchase intention (e.g., Han & Stoel, 2017; Kumar et al., 2021). Although the sustainable sector has consistently demonstrated a gap between attitudes and behaviors, this study found that Malaysian Gen Z consumers' positive

attitudes translate into stronger purchase intentions. The research suggests that attitudes act as the key psychological mechanism linking influencer credibility attributes to consumer behavioural outcomes. So, enhance the consumers' positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion is particularly important for encouraging sustainable purchase behavior in the Malaysian market.

5.3 Research Implication

5.3.1 Practical Implications

Firstly, the study findings offer useful insights for sustainable fashion brands and marketers to create more effective influencer marketing strategies. In addition, the attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of significant impact on the consumers' attitudes suggest that the fashion brands should choose the social media influencers carefully, and those who not only have the strong visual attractiveness but also show the authenticity and relevant knowledge in the sustainable fashion areas. In particular, trustworthiness has emerged as a key factor which indicates that transparent communication, honest product reviews, and a genuine commitment is important to the sustainability to foster the positive consumer perceptions. So, it is suggested that sustainable fashion brands collaborate with social media influencers who consistently demonstrate sustainable values, rather than relying solely on popularity or follower count (e.g., Kapoor et al., 2021; Sipos, 2024).

Secondly, the research results highlighted the importance of strengthening consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion because it is a pathway to enhance the purchase intention. As attitude

positively affects purchase intention, marketers should create content that highlights the environmental and ethical benefits of sustainable fashion. Not only that, the storytelling techniques, behind-the-scenes production processes and the evidence-based sustainability claims can help to shape the favorable attitudes and reduce the doubt among the consumers (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). Moreover, emphasizing the authenticity and minimizing the exaggerated claims can mitigate the concerns that are related to the greenwashing which has been shown to negatively impact the consumer trust and decision-making.

Finally, the study provides the practical implications for the social media influencers themselves. The influencers should recognize the role of them not just as the promoters, but as the credible opinion leaders who can shape the sustainable consumption behavior among their followers. On the other hand, the social media influencers can strengthen their credibility and boost the stronger engagement with their audience by enhancing their expertise through the knowledge sharing, providing accurate information and maintaining the consistency in their content (e.g., Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Furthermore, the makers of the policy and industry stakeholders may also benefit from these research findings by developing the guidelines or the best practices that encourage the ethical social media influencers marketing and the transparency in the sustainability claim, thus supporting the growth of a more trustworthy and the responsible sustainable fashion ecosystem.

5.3.2 Theoretical Implications

The Source Credibility Theory offers a comprehensive framework for explaining how the characteristics of social media influencers impact consumer perceptions and behavioral responses. The theory defines credibility through key dimensions like attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, not viewing the marketing persuasion solely as being driven by product features or promotional content. These factors serve as important cues that shape the consumer to evaluate the

information provided by influencers. The theoretical relevance of applying this framework in this study lies in the fact that consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion brands can be understood as a multi-dimensional evaluation process influenced by the varying credibility attributes of opinion leaders. To serve as persuasion cues, the credibility impacts consumers' interpretations of the sustainability-related information, thereby shaping their positive attitudes toward the promoted brands. Moreover, the research findings reinforce the theoretical assumption that attitude plays a critical role in predicting behavioral intention, presenting that positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion significantly contribute to enhancing purchase intentions. By examining the relationships of Malaysian Gen Z consumers, the study extends the application of the Source Credibility Theory to sustainable fashion and social media influencer marketing areas while deepening our understanding of how credibility-based persuasion strategies impact consumer decision-making in the current social media landscape.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study provides useful findings but also acknowledges that all research has limitations. The limitations identified in this study do not diminish the significance of the research findings, but rather highlight the boundaries of the study. In this study, the researchers clearly state that these limitations are important to ensure transparency, enhance the research, and facilitate a realistic interpretation of the results. Moreover, these limitations highlight areas for future research and improve understanding of influencer effects on sustainable fashion purchase intentions.

The first limitation is the imbalance ratio of the respondents. The respondents' gender ratio showed no clear difference, but in terms of racial background, the highest percentage ratio was among Chinese respondents. Moreover, most of the respondents have bachelor's degrees, which led to a concentration of participants with similar educational backgrounds. Although the data that was collected remains valuable, it may limit the general applicability of the findings to the all Gen Z

population in Malaysia. For example, the views of Malays, Indians, and other minority groups, as well as respondents with education levels lower than a bachelor's degree, may be understudied in these research findings. Therefore, there are certain cultural, social, and educational factors that could impact the sustainable purchase intentions, which might not be fully reflected in the study's findings.

Another limitation is the data collection method of this study. The research relied fully on respondents filling out the online questionnaire through Google Forms. Although this way allows for data collection efficiency and reaches a broader range of respondents, but it also exists the risk of response bias. The respondents may provide answers that link with social expectations, or their responses might not fully reflect their actual purchase behaviors. So, the research findings mainly reflect respondents' attitudes and intentions toward sustainable fashion, rather than their actual purchase behaviors.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This research study collected feedback from Malaysian Gen Z consumers, but it was found that the proportions of Chinese respondents and those having the bachelor's degrees were more than in other demographic groups, which indicates a demographic imbalance. This data highlights that adopting more structured sampling methods in future research is most important. So, future researchers can consider the ways of using quota sampling to ensure that the sample is more balanced in Malaysia's different ethnic groups, educational backgrounds, and other demographic characteristics (Gordon, 2024). Through the pre-setting of quotas of variables like ethnicity, gender, and educational level, the researchers can ensure that Malays, Indians, and other ethnic minority groups are fully represented in the sample. The ways will help future research studies gain more findings on the Gen Z population in Malaysia and fully understand the sustainable fashion purchase behavior.

Furthermore, future research could adopt additional data-collection methods to enhance respondent engagement and improve response quality, such as combining online surveys and offline data collection methods, like distributing questionnaires at universities, shopping malls, or sustainable fashion events, aiming to reach a broader range of respondents. Providing small rewards or appreciation gifts to the participants can also encourage more respondents to participate and increase the amount of the response rate. Moreover, design the questionnaire to be brief and easy for the respondents to understand, making it easier for respondents to comprehend the content and making the entire experience more engaging for them. When respondents perceive that they are valued, they typically respond positively and provide valuable feedback.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study supports all the hypotheses tested and also discusses limitations while offering recommendations for future research.

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