

Review of Malaysian Social Media Influencers Credibility

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ABSTRACT

This review study delves into the self-promotion strategies of social media platforms, particularly focusing on the realm of influencer's criteria that are credible for the Malaysia market. The primary objective of this research is to enlighten marketers about existing Influencer's Criteria guidelines with insights into effectively identifying credible influencers for promoting their brands. Employing qualitative methodologies, the research employs techniques such as content analysis, case studies, and observation of promotional video content. The investigation centres around five Instagram influencers from Malaysia, examining their advertising approaches, alignment with specific niches, and the categories of content they share. The findings underscore the paramount importance of various factors in influencer selection, including relevance, authenticity, engagement, reach, content quality, brand alignment, and a proven track record. Furthermore, the research delves into the array of video content that influencers employed. Armed with an understanding of how influencers present themselves and the characteristics that define influential individuals, marketers are equipped to mitigate the risks associated with influencer marketing fraud and establish fruitful collaborations that resonate with their brands.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Social Media Influencers, Influencers Criteria, Content Analysis, Influencer Style of Content



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1. INFLUENCER IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media plays a pivotal role within the realm of digital advertising (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). Starting from 2016, the emergence of platforms like TikTok, Facebook Live, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram have ushered in a transformation in the way content is consumed and shared on social media. Social media video content has become dominant as the main content feed to the audience as Sulaiman & Abdul Aziz (2017) mentioned, an object or occurrence can be depicted, captured in photographs, recorded, or filmed, subsequently saved, and when needed, presented, and revisited, mirroring the original event. All this recorded image and moving image (video) shared by influencers has their attractive and original values. These kinds of content offer fresh avenues for advertising and suggestive marketing, particularly through short videos that facilitate both one-to-one and many-to-many social interactions by combining video content with scrollable text overlays. Recognizing the potential of short videos, social media influencers have integrated them into their marketing strategies, targeting specific niches. With the rise of social media influencers, there is the issue of influencer marketing fraud within Malaysia. These kinds of influencers are making the product or brand endorsement a failure.

1.1 Challenge to Find Genuine Influencer

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak, influencers have been known to resort to tactics like purchasing fake followers or altering account IDs to deceive advertisers (Claudia Primasiwi et al., 2021). This presents a considerable challenge for marketers who must discern the genuineness and dependability of the influencers they collaborate with. Those who prioritize financial gains over thorough research run the risk of falling prey to influencer marketing scams. Marketers should know to distinguish the influencer marketing fraud. This study is to assist Malaysian marketers in verifying the credibility of chosen influencers before embarking on marketing initiatives.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFLUENCERS STUDY

This study used influencers from Instagram. Why Instagram? It's a proven social media for promoting business. As Kirana et al. (2018) describe the phenomenon of utilizing social networking platforms like Instagram for conducting businesses and generating economic benefits is highly intriguing. This is linked to the fact that Instagram is indeed a multifunctional social network. At the end of this study revealed the strategies utilized by social media influencers to market and present themselves while endorsing products for their clients. By scrutinizing the strategies and tactics they employ, the study will illuminate how influencers effectively engage their audience. Products and brand marketers can gain valuable insights into optimal practices for influencer marketing and implement safeguards to mitigate the risks associated with fraud. This research shows how influencers promote and manage their public image to endorse products on behalf of their clients, and outlines scoring guidelines for marketers to take as a safeguard to their businesses from influencer-related deception. The study also encompasses the criteria governing the selection of suitable influencers, the variety of video content styles employed by influencers from Malaysia, and the impact of influencer marketing fraud on the decision-making processes of marketers.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study endeavours to review five top influencer criteria to foster awareness and provide guidance to marketers in the process of selecting optimal influencers for the promotion of their products or brands through skilfully managed short video advertisements on social media platforms. Employing review studies and content analysis of short video promotional content, the primary objective is to grasp the elements that render social media short videos impactful and to comprehend the implications of marketers' decisions to incorporate influencer marketing into their corporate strategies. The focal point of this study lies in the realm of concise video content on social media platforms, particularly concentrating on how influencers navigate self-promotion and the endorsement of client products.

The methodology employed in this study initiates with a comprehensive content analysis of five top Instagram influencers from a reliable source. These influencers have been analysed with good practice criteria suggested by Influencer Marketing Hub. The influencer profiles that are assessed, including influencer criteria, follower count, post frequency, engagement metrics, style of content, collaborations, sponsored posts, impressions, and target demographics. This inquiry unveiled valuable insights into the promotional methodologies, niche relevance, and prevalent content categories of Malaysian influencers.

The study's overarching aim was to decipher the efficacious techniques adopted by social media influencers for self-promotion. Employing the content analysis methodology, the study aimed to unearth the distinctive attributes of influential influencers, scrutinize the content they generate, and identify their platform preferences. The exploration was particularly directed at Instagram, acknowledged as a pivotal marketing conduit for social media influencers. The ultimate intention of this research was to illuminate the strategies harnessed by influencers to effectively showcase themselves and captivate their audience, achieved by a comprehensive investigation of their profiles, collaborations, and target audience demographics.

4. INFLUENCER CRITERIA

Comprehending the strategies social media influencers employ for self-promotion and mitigating influencer marketing fraud hinges significantly on the benchmarks and characteristics that define a competent influencer need to establish. Key considerations provided by Influencer Hub encompass audience, engagement rate, relevance, authenticity, values, content quality, frequency, reliability, and audience quality. Influencers can effectively showcase products and services by intertwining their content with the brand's industry, values, and intended demographic. The establishment of an authentic rapport with their followers and the consistent creation of genuine content are pivotal in cultivating trust and establishing credibility. Active engagement from followers indicates a robust connection and can result in heightened brand visibility. A substantial follower base serves to amplify brand messaging, while content of superior quality marked by storytelling and visual appeal captivates the audience. Ensuring alignment with the brand's values and a proven record of fruitful collaborations serve as safeguards against deceptive activities.

4.1 Relevant Criteria of Suitable Influencer

Every Influencer has different criteria or characteristics, marketers usually are picking an influencer depending on their viral ability which can bring the value into the wrong direction and result. The suitable influencers are depending on certain criteria. In this article, the assessment of suitable influencers is using 9 factors to be considered as suggested by Influencer Marketing Hub.

Table 1 Criteria/Characteristics of a Suitable Influencer Recommended by Influencer Marketing Hub

Criteria / Characteristic	Description
Audience	The potential customer.
Engagement rate	An influencer has an engaged and active audience, indicated by follower interactions, comments, likes, and shares.
Relevance	The influencer's content and niche align with the brand's industry, values, and target audience.
Authenticity	Influencers have a genuine connection with their audience and consistently produce authentic content.
Values	Influencer's content exhibits high production value, storytelling abilities, creativity, and aesthetics. Has a proven track record of successful collaborations and delivering results.
Content Quality	An influencer creative freedom has content that's clear, well-composed, creative, consistent, and optimized
Frequency	The influencer's numbers of posting/ publish high quality content (high engagement)
Reliability	The influencer can communicate, collaborate, and has good review
Audience Quality	The influencer's brand and values align content quality, following numbers, engagement numbers.

Note. From "9 Factors to Consider to Pick the Right Instagram Influencer for Your Brand" by Influencer Hub, 2021, (<https://influencermarketinghub.com/pick-the-right-instagram-influencer/#toc-9>)

By incorporating these elements, marketers are empowered to make well-informed choices when selecting authentic, influential influencers capable of yielding desired outcomes. Focusing on authenticity, engagement, and a proven history of success enables marketers to foster lucrative partnerships that facilitate effective brand promotion. Integrating these criteria not only serves as a deterrent to influencer marketing fraud but also empowers marketers to leverage the influencer's potential in legitimately and effectively connecting with their target audience.

This study then populates this criterion into rubric method assessment as a scoring guide. Crusan (2010) mentioned rubrics can help assessor understand and clarify the expectation. Below is the rubric to assess the influencer score credibility used in this study.

Table 2 Rubric Score Guide to analyst Credibility of Suitable Influencer

Credibility Score	Insufficient	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Audience	Low right audience	Fair right audience	Good potential customer audience	Very good potential customer audience	Great and excellent potential customer audience
Engagement rate	No engagement	Fair engaged and active audience, indicated by follower interactions, comments, likes, and shares.	Good engaged and active audience, indicated by follower interactions, comments, likes, and shares.	Very good engaged and active audience, indicated by follower interactions, comments, likes, and shares.	Excellent engaged and active audience, indicated by follower interactions, comments, likes, and shares.
Relevance	Not relevance	Content and niche have fair alignment with brand, value & audience.	Content and niche have good alignment with brand, value & audience.	Content and niche very well align with brand, value & audience.	Content and niche excellent align with brand, value & audience.
Authenticity	unknown profile	detail is hidden	Trusted but not verified by the platform	Trusted & Verified by the Platform	Trusted & Verified by the Platform and have large endorsement
Values	no values exhibit	Exhibits fair production value	Exhibits good production value	Exhibits very good production value	Exhibits high production value
Content Quality	Fake, copy & paste, and steal content from others	Fair content that's clear, well composed, creative, consistent, and optimized	Good content that's clear, well composed, creative, consistent, and optimized	Very Good content that's clear, well composed, creative, consistent, and optimized	Excellent content that's clear, well composed, creative, consistent, and optimized
Frequency	No regular posting	fair numbers of posting/ publish high quality content (high engagement)	Good numbers of posting/ publish high quality content (high engagement)	Very Good numbers of posting/ publish high quality content (high engagement)	Excellent numbers of posting/ publish high quality content (high engagement)
Reliability	Bad in communicate and hard to reach	Fairs communicate, collaborate, and has good review	Good communicate, collaborate, and has good review	Very good communicate, collaborate, and has good review	Excellent communicate, collaborate, and has good review
Audience Quality	Does not have content quality, following numbers, engagement numbers to engage with.	Fair brand and values align content quality, following numbers and engagement numbers	Good brand and values align content quality, following numbers and engagement numbers	Very Good brand and values align content quality, following numbers and engagement numbers	Excellent brand and values align content quality, following numbers and engagement numbers

Note. Rubric table as Score Guide for assessing “Criteria/Characteristics of a Suitable Influencer Recommended” in Table 1

4.2 Type of Content Video Styles

Malaysian influencers employ a diverse array of video content styles to effectively market themselves and foster engagement with their audiences. Influencer Marketing Hub endorse 9 video content styles to be explore Among these content styles are tutorial and how-to videos, product reviews and recommendations videos, user-generated videos, announcements / reveals videos, interview and Q&A videos, event videos, behind-the-scenes videos, promoting offers and deals videos and tell relatable stories videos.

Through these 9 video content styles, influencers adeptly showcase products, share their expertise, offer glimpses into their personal lives, and provide unique insights into their creative journey. The tutorials showcase expertise, positioning influencers as authoritative figures in their respective domains. Relatable stories like lifestyle vlogs establish a sense of relatability and authenticity, fostering a strong connection with viewers. Collaborations and sponsored content open doors for brand partnerships, necessitating transparency and honesty to avert fraudulent practices. Behind-the-scenes videos encourage transparency and enrich the authenticity of influencers' creative processes. By leveraging these diverse content formats, influencers effectively promote themselves while upholding trust and thwarting influencer marketing fraud.

Table 3 Style of Video Used by Influencers as recommended by Influencer Marketing Hub.

Style of Video Content	Style of Video Content Code	Content Description
Tutorial and How-To Videos	C01	Influencers create instructional videos demonstrating product use or teaching specific skills. Lifestyle Vlogs
Product Reviews and Recommendations	C02	Influencers review and recommend products relevant to their niche, showcasing features and benefits.
User-Generated Videos	C03	Influencers stitch / sharing fans / follower video content
Announcements / Reveals Videos	C04	Influencers announce new products/service
Interview and Q&A Videos	C05	Influencers interview leaders, industry, team members and event customer
Event Videos	C06	Influencer share live video feeds, teaser video, shorter video
Behind-the-Scenes Videos	C07	Influencers share exclusive behind-the-scenes content, offering insights into their creative process.
Promoting Offers and Deals Videos	C08	Influencers collaborate with brands, integrating sponsored content into their videos.
Tell Relatable Stories Videos	C09	Influencers collaborate with brands, integrating sponsored content into their videos.

Note. From "9 Best Types of Social Media Videos for 2023" by Werner Geysler, 2023, (<https://influencermarketinghub.com/social-media-video-types/#toc-8>)

Grasping these styles of video content formats is pivotal in comprehending influencers' self-promotion methods and in countering influencer marketing fraud. Deliberately utilizing these video content formats, influencers work towards building credibility, authenticity, and trust within their audience. Product evaluations and recommendations allow influencers to offer valuable insights and guidance to their followers, thereby enhancing their influence.

5. SAMPLE DATA OF TOP 5 INFLUENCERS IN MALAYSIA

Top five Instagram influencers were selected from the top 20 influencers data retrieved from modash.io. This data has been last updated 28 Julai 2023 (at the time this article is written) is populated in Table 4.

Table 4 Current Top 5 Malaysian Influencers (updated July 28, 2023)

Influencers Rank	Influencers name	Followers	Instagram Tag	Engagement Rate	Average Likes	Audience in Malaysia only
1	Duriankimchi	499k	@duriankimchi	2.87%	14.3k	93.25 %
2	Stargirl	489.1k	@cupcake_aisyah	5.3%	25.9k	87.3%
3	WSPO	486,8k	@oktoviamanrose	2.15%	10.5k	95.67%
4	Mona	482.4k	@monanananana_	10.61%	51.2k	81.93%
5	Arina	481.9k	@arinanasirudin	4.2%	20.2k	91.55%

Note. From "Top 20 Malaysian Influencers: Find influencers in Malaysia" by Modash, 2023, (<https://www.modash.io/find-influencers/malaysia>) (updated July 28, 2023)

Table 5 Current Top 5 Malaysian Influencers Credibility Assessment Result

Influencer Rank	1	2	3	4	5
Style of Video Content Code	C01, C02, C03, C04, C06, C08, C09	C01, C02, C03, C04, C08, C09	C01, C02, C04, C07, C08, C09	C01, C02, C04, C08,	C01, C02, C04, C06, C08, C09
Audience	93.25%	87.3%	95.67 %	81.93 %	91.55%
Engagement Rate	2.87 %	5.3%	2.15 %	10.61%	4.2%
Relevance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Authenticity	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Values	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Content Quality	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Frequency	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Fair	Fair
Reliability	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Audience Quality	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

Note. "Current Top 5 Malaysian Influencers (updated July 28, 2023)" have been assessed with "Criteria/Characteristics of a Suitable Influencer Recommended" in Table 1 and "Style of Video Used by Influencers" in Table 2 as recommended by Influencer Marketing Hub"

From this assessment result, these top 5 influencers (at that time) span similar domains which are true story and lifestyle events that boast substantial followings ranging from 400k to 500k. Their engagement with their audience encompasses similar areas of content styles, which is C01(how to video), C02 (product review), and C04 (announcement). Additionally, all top 5 influencer has their collaborations with well-established companies involve product endorsements and sponsored posts make this top 5 are excellent and authentic.

Assessing these influencers, the score guide is conclude as paramount importance. Marketers can learn meticulous guidelines to assess the credibility of influencers, considering factors such as engagement metrics, alignment with target audiences, and a history of successful partnerships. Despite possessing attributes such as expertise, integrity, genuine authenticity, and visual appeal, these influencers might resort to artificial follower acquisition or deceptive practices to deceive businesses. To safeguard their enterprises from the pitfalls of influencer marketing fraud and to ensure ethically sound and fruitful collaborations with influencers capable of effectively reaching their intended audience, marketers must diligently carry out thorough research and due diligence.

6. FINDING

The examination of selected Malaysian influencers has yielded pivotal insights into the strategies suggested by Influencer Marketing Hub with the suggested rubric score guide is relevant for Malaysia's marketers to use as a guideline to employ social media influencers services. These revelations underscore the diversified content formats harnessed by influencers, their interactions with companies, their emphasis on authenticity and genuine connections, alignment with specific target demographics, and their conscious consideration of engagement rates and visual aesthetics. The influencers' content spans a spectrum encompassing music, comedy, fitness, lifestyle, beauty, parenting, travel, and gaming, facilitating their reach into distinct niche audiences. Collaborative ventures and sponsored content serve as avenues for influencers to monetize their efforts while providing marketers with a direct conduit to engage their intended audience.

With influencers placing emphasis on staying true to their identities and crafting content that resonates, the pivotal role of authenticity and establishing authentic bonds with their audience emerges as a cornerstone of their success. Ensuring alignment with target demographics, gauging engagement rates, and upholding visual aesthetics all emerge as vital considerations, allowing influencers to tailor their content to the preferences of their audience and captivating their attention with visually appealing material. These findings illuminate the weight of authenticity, focused content, partnerships, engagement, and aesthetic allure within the sphere of influencer promotion strategies.

By the way, several limitations warrant consideration in the context of this study. Firstly, the research's scope is confined to influencer marketing fraud within the Malaysian context, potentially curbing the broader applicability of the findings to other regions or countries. Secondly, the study's reliance on qualitative methods might restrict the extent to which the conclusions can be extrapolated to a more extensive population. Additionally, the research leans on data collection methods like social media observation, and content analysis. All of which may introduce inherent biases and limitations in the interpretation of data. Furthermore, the study's focus is exclusively on Instagram influencers, potentially encompassing only a portion of the overall influencer marketing landscape across various social media platforms. Lastly, the study does not venture into the legal and regulatory dimensions of influencer marketing fraud, which could prove pivotal in mitigating fraudulent practices.

In summation, accomplished Malaysian social media influencers effectively propagate their presence through strategic content creation, partnership cultivation, authenticity, alignment with target audiences, and adept engagement tactics.

By crafting content that forges connections, forging genuine relationships, collaborating with companies, and considering visual aesthetics and engagement rates, influencers have succeeded in developing distinctive personal brands and forging meaningful connections with both their followers and partners. Beside this quality of influencer score presence, the marketer should beware of being scammed by the fraud influencer.

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All authors contributed equally to this research paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this paper declare that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or personal relationships in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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