Blog Influence on Purchase Intention of Beauty and Cosmetics Products: The Psychological Antecedents

Cheng, W.H. [1], Goh, Y.N. [2*], Zainal, N.N. [3*], Janifer Lunyai[4]

[1,2] Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
[3]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 08400, Merbok, Kedah, Malaysia
[4]Faculty of Economics & Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia
Corresponding author's email: yngoh@usm.my; nurdiyana20@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

This study investigates the psychological antecedents on consumer purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products. The psychological antecedents include advertising intent, experience goods, brand awareness, perceived credibility, and perceived usefulness. Meanwhile, attitude is posited to mediate the relationships between psychological antecedents and consumer purchase intention. This study was quantitative, utilising of cross-sectional design, in which the data were gathered through a survey. This study focused on the consumers of beauty and cosmetic products in Malaysia. A structured self-administered survey involving 175 participants was conducted. PLS-SEM was used to analyse the collected data. Statistical tools, IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23.0 and Smart PLS version 3, were used for data analysis and hypothesis testing. The results showed that advertising intent, brand awareness, perceived credibility, and perceived usefulness are related to purchase intention. Surprisingly, experience goods did not have any influence on purchase intention. Also, attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts did not mediate the relationship between experience goods and purchase intention. Nevertheless, this study sheds some light on the values–attitude-behaviour hierarchy on purchase intention.

Keywords: purchase intention, advertising intent, brand awareness, perceived credibility, perceived usefulness

1.0   Introduction

The cosmetic industry is expanding and growing around the globe. The Malaysian market for beauty and cosmetics products has been tremendous which in 2020, the average revenue per capita in

Malaysia's beauty and personal care market was the highest in the personal care segment 2020 (Statista Research Department, 2021). The continuous growth in the cosmetic industry offers an excellent opportunity for those interested in promoting their cosmetic products. Nonetheless, as highlighted by Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019), for cosmetics and beauty products companies to rely on their company website to share their product content might not be adequate to drive consumer demand. Still, they need to be aware of the sites on which people post and share comments about their products, such as blogs. For businesses to stay connected with their customers, numerous beauty and cosmetics brands have turned to blogs, a form of social media that is easily accessible to users. In addition, Chakraborty and Bhat (2018) highlight those consumers nowadays have turned to social media platforms to gain and share knowledge about brands. Blogs have gained wide attention and experienced considerable growth in the last few years as one of the marketing communication tools (Colton, 2018). Halvorsen et al. (2013) argue that the blogging phenomenon is now relevant in marketing channels, with blogs related to fashion brands, fashion products, and street style constituting the most significant segments in the blogosphere.

Moreover, blogs have become a part of the consumer decision-making processes (Hsu et al., 2013). For example, consumers may refer to beauty bloggers for recommendations on beauty and cosmetic products before making a purchase decision. Nevertheless, with the increasing popularity of beauty and cosmetic products, many companies sponsor posts on major beauty blogs. It may create an image that the posts or comments may be biased towards the sponsor, indirectly affecting the consumers' confidence and trust. Consequently, consumers may not trust sponsored posts or advertisements anymore. They see them as a promotional attempt instead of helping them by sharing opinions. In Olenski's (2013) survey, about 76 per cent of respondents said that advertisements, in general, were exaggerated, 87 per cent perceived that half or more cleaning advertisements were edited, and 96 per cent perceived that half or more weight loss advertisements were edited. Nonetheless, savvy consumers have figured out how to look beyond a product's advertisement (Ray, 2015).

As blogging becomes an increasingly popular tool for expressing and sharing feelings, thoughts, and opinions on any topic of interest, the literature on blogs is growing. For example, research conducted by Lu et al. (2014) on the consumers' attitudes towards

blogger sponsored recommendations and purchase intention in Taiwan. The content may shape consumers' perceptions and images of the product and helps them make a purchase decision (Muda, 2019). A review of past literature had found several studies related to blog influence, such as Halvorsen et al. (2013), Hsu et al. (2013), Hahn and Lee (2014), Lu et al. (2014) and Colton (2018). In the past literature, scholars had examined blog influence on purchase intention in many contexts, such as electronic products (Colton, 2018; Lu et al., 2014), general (Bahtar et al., 2016; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Hsu et al., 2013; Ho et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2016; Muda, 2020;), automotive (Hutter et al., 2013), apparel (Cooley et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2015; Jung et al., 2016), and beauty and cosmetics (Lee et al., 2019; Yulianto et al., 2021). Besides that, the research setting was diverse among past scholars. For example, research was conducted in Taiwan (Hsu et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2014), the United States (Colton et al., 2018; Cooley et al., 2019; Jung et al., 2016;), Malaysia (Bahtar et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2016; Muda, 2020), United Kingdom (Erkan & Evans, 2016;), German (Hutter et al., 2013), and Indonesia (Yulianto et al., 2021). However, beauty and cosmetic products have received little attention from scholars, especially those related to integrated marketing communication and social media, like the influence of blogs on consumers' decision-making process in the Malaysian context.

Moreover, Malaysia, being a developing economy, has not received much attention from scholars, contributing to a gap in the literature. A call for equally deserving research to promote rapid growth has become relevant. Understanding the psychological antecedents that stimulate consumers' interest in purchase intention under blog influence is pertinent (Cummins et al., 2014). Moreover, as suggested by Hahn and Lee (2014), investigating the mediating role of attitude could be valuable and shed some light on the values–attitude-behaviour hierarchy on purchase intention.

The current study aims to address the gaps in the previous literature by examining the psychological antecedents of consumer purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products in Malaysia, under the influence of beauty blogs. Specifically, the psychological antecedents include advertising intent, experience goods, brand awareness, perceived credibility, and usefulness. In addition, attitude is posited to mediate the relationships between the psychological antecedents and consumer purchase intention.

2.0   Literature Review

2.1   Purchase Intention

Purchase intention portrays the mental stage in the decision-making process where consumers have built up a genuine readiness to act upon a product, service, or brand (Hutter et al., 2013). Lu et al. (2014) describe purchase intention as a consumer's conscious plan or intention to make an effort to purchase a product at a specific time or in a particular situation. In terms of the blogosphere, purchase intention could be measured by the products displayed by bloggers (Hahn and Lee, 2014). For instance, in a study of fashion blogs, consumer attitudes positively affect purchase intention towards the fashion products displayed by a blogger (Hahn and Lee, 2014). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) state that behavioural intention takes a specific action.

Lu et al. (2014) indicate that the influence of consumer attitude towards a blog on consumer purchase intention is significantly positive. Additionally, quality communication could increase consumers' positive attitude towards blogs, which influences the consumers' demonstration of the ability to buy the recommended products. Also, Chen and Chang (2016) describe purchase intention as the likelihood of purchasing a product.

2.2   Advertising Intent

According to Bahtar & Muda (2016), searches for product information and customer feedback are common among consumers before they make any purchases. With this knowledge in mind, marketers use blogs' influences by sponsoring bloggers to use and review their products. Blogs are very cost-effective in which users could quickly post brand-related information on their blogs as one of the ideal tools for online marketing (Kulmala, Mesiranta & Tuominen, 2013). Nevertheless, sponsored information from blogs may negatively impact persuasion if their readers identify any biased intent (Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2011). Consumers will be less likely to be persuaded by a sponsored post if they are informed that the post is sponsored. It is due to the assumption that a sponsored post has more positive information about the product (Lu et al., 2014). Sponsorship disclosure influences consumer response to a sponsored blog post, which causes lower credibility and lesser positive attitudes. However, some studies find that if the content is based on honest opinions, it can

restore credibility and increase persuasive power (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). Therefore, we hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 1:   Advertising intent negatively influences the purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

2.3   Experience Goods

In the context of this study, beauty products are labelled as experience goods. It occurs especially when the purchase intention of beauty products tends to be more subjective and involves personal interaction (Lu et al. 2014). Online search behaviour for search goods and experience goods are different. Consumers usually visit web pages when looking for information on search goods, while blogs on experience goods (Lu et al., 2014). Consumers are more likely to have a positive attitude when search goods are featured in a blog than experience goods (Lu et al., 2014; Moon et al., 2008).

Based on past studies' findings, experience goods negatively influence the attitude towards information credibility, which affects purchase intention (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010; Lu et al., 2014; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). Based on the past studies, experience goods indirectly influence purchase intention (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Lu et al., 2014; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). Accordingly, we hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 2:   Experience goods negatively influence the purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

2.4   Brand Awareness

Brand awareness mirrors the ability to recall and perceive a brand within a given classification in adequate detail to make a purchase (Kakkos et al., 2015). Brand awareness is certain attributes of a familiar product which simplify product information and purchase decision (Ho et al., 2015). Jung and Seock (2016) mention that consumers often rely on their brand awareness to make a quick purchase decision. Previous studies have mentioned that consumers feel that a well-known brand is more reliable than an unfamiliar brand. The consumers who are already familiar with a brand's quality and the consumers who perceive a product to have high brand awareness would not use deceptive marketing tactics (Lu et al., 2014). Lee et al. (2019) also find that brand awareness positively influences consumers'

purchase intention of skincare products among university students in Malaysia.

Based on the past studies' findings, brand awareness is positively related to purchase intention (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Kakkos et al., 2015; Jung & Seock, 2016, Lee et al., 2019; Yulianto et al., 2021). Meanwhile, in Halal cosmetics, brand awareness reports the same results as conventional beauty and cosmetic products (Yulianto et al., 2021). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3:   Brand awareness positively influences the purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

2.5   Perceived Credibility

Information credibility is an initial factor in persuasion (Erkan & Evans, 2016). According to Mumuni et al. (2019), credibility could be the consumers' confidence in a communication source. In blogs, credibility is about 'consumer perception that claims made within a particular blog are truthful and believable concerning an objective opinion of the brand or 52tilization52' (Colton, 2018; p.97). In the online context, online users perceive user-generated content as a more credible source of information than the content provided by sellers (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). In other words, consumer perception of advertising credibility significantly influences attitude towards a brand and purchase intention (Prendergast et al., 2009).

Additionally, Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019) state that adding the elements of credibility will enhance buying intention. Companies' sponsored reviews may dilute the perceived credibility (Muda & Mohamed, 2020). However, an 52tilization52 review is perceived to be unbiased if the readers know that the reviewer is 52tilization52 (Jacobsen, 2018). Credibility positively affects advertising, affecting purchase intention (Dinh & Mai, 2016). Based on these findings, we hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 4:   Perceived credibility positively influences the purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

2.6   Perceived Usefulness (PU)

People tend to engage with information when they think it is beneficial (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Perceived usefulness can be one factor that influences online consumer responses to the information

provided by others. It could affect their attitudes and the purchase of the discussed products (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Sin et al.'s (2012) research analysis indicates that perceived usefulness significantly affects purchase intention. A previous study in Malaysia supports that perceived usefulness has a significant positive impact on online shopping intention (Lim et al., 2016). As reported by Liu et al. (2017), perceived usefulness positively influences consumer adoption intention of online service providers. Based on past empirical studies of social media and Facebook by Sin et al. (2012) and Lin and Kim (2016), it is found that perceived usefulness plays an important role in strengthening the influence to purchase. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Perceived usefulness positively influences the purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products

2.7 Attitude towards Sponsored Recommendation Post (ATT)

Behaviour is determined by intentions, dictated by attitudes, as well as subjective norms (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1972). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) propose that consumer attitudes directly influence their behavioural aim, which in turn will influence their purchase behaviour. Prior studies have found that advertising intent significantly affects product attitude and indirectly relates to purchasing intention (Zhu & Tan, 2007; Uribe et al., 2016). Meanwhile, experience goods negatively affect consumer attitude towards information, which affects consumer behavioural intention (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010; Lu et al., 2014; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015).

As for brand awareness, consumer attitude towards online information is also significantly influenced by brand awareness. It subsequently affects advertising effectiveness, which indirectly influences purchase intention (Lu et al., 2014; Hutter et al., 2013; Ho et al., 2015). Perceived credibility influences consumer attitude towards advertising, affecting purchase intention (Prendergast et al., 2009; Dinh & Mai, 2016; Ballantine &Yeung, 2015; Erkan & Evans, 2016). On the other hand, a 53tilizatnship has been established between attitude and purchase intention for perceived usefulness (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Sin et al., 2012; Renny & Hotniar, 2013). Therefore, the following hypotheses on the mediating relationship are proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts mediates the relationship between advertising intent and the purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

Hypothesis 7: Attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts mediates the relationship between experience goods and purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

Hypothesis 8: Attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts mediates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

Hypothesis 9: Attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts mediates the relationship between perceived credibility and purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

Hypothesis 10: Attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts mediates the relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products.

In this study, we proposed that under blogs' influence, psychological antecedents, including advertising intent, experience goods, brand awareness, perceived credibility, and perceived usefulness, would influence consumers' purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products. In addition, attitudes are posited to mediate the relationship between psychological antecedents and consumer purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products. The proposed research model for the study is shown in Figure 1.
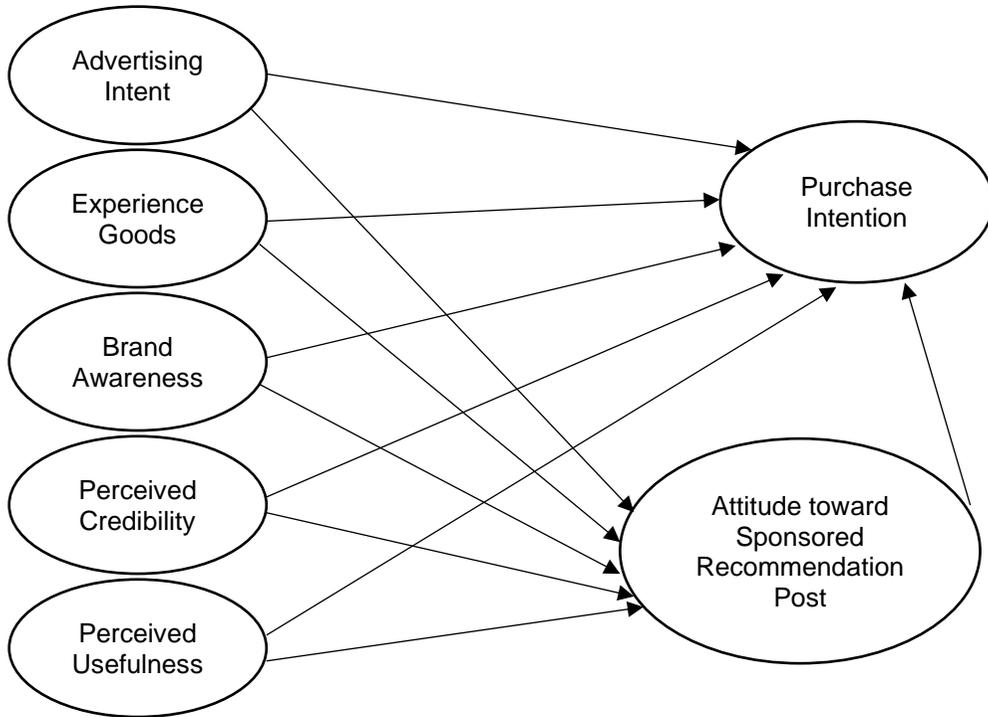
Figure 1: Research Model

3.0   Methodology

3.1   Research Design

This study focused on the consumers of beauty and cosmetic products in Malaysia. This study was quantitative with the 55tilization of a cross-sectional design, in which the data were gathered through a survey. A structured self-administered survey was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed to several major shopping malls in Penang, Malaysia. The survey consisted of an example of a beauty blog (printed screen image) placed on the survey's cover page. The survey was divided into four different sections. Section A was used to solicit the background information of respondents. The second section comprises questions related to independent variables, that were factors that change consumer attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts. The third section measured consumer attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts. Next, the fourth section measured respondent purchase intention.

Additionally, the scales for the constructs, namely advertising intent, experience goods, brand awareness, perceived credibility,

perceived usefulness, attitude, and purchase intention, were adopted and adapted from past studies (Zhu & Tan, 2007; Moon et al., 2008; Sasmita and Mohd Suki, 2015; Prendergast et al. 2009; Järveläinen, 2004; Lu et al. 2014) to suit the beauty and cosmetic products' setting (see appendix for the complete measurement items). The Likert scale ranged from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) not sure, (4) agree to (5) strongly agree. Since this study was exploratory, a component-based structural equation modelling (SEM) was deemed fit (Hair et al., 2011). Statistical tools IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23.0 and Smart PLS version 3 (Ringle, Wende and Becker, 2015) were used for data analysis and hypothesis testing.

3.2   Sample Profile

The unit of analysis was Malaysian consumers aged 18 and above. Since it was not possible to obtain a sampling frame for all Malaysian consumers, a convenience sampling method was adopted for this study. This was done by distributing hard copy surveys to consumers via mall intercepts. 300 self-administrated questionnaires were allocated for this study, and 175 completed responses were obtained. As Green (1991) recommended, a minimum sample size of 117 is required for medium effect size (i.e., a total of 10 arrows pointing at a dependent variable). Hence, with 175 completed surveys, the sample size was deemed sufficient.

The analysis showed that 83 male and 92 female respondents participated in this survey. From the sample, most of them were aged 26 to 30 (47.4 %). In terms of education level, most of the respondents held bachelor's degrees (65.7 %). This was followed by postgraduate and higher levels of education at 22.3 per cent, and 12 per cent of the respondents were in other levels. In terms of monthly income, the majority of respondents fell under the range of RM2001 to RM4000 (47.1 %), followed by RM4001 to RM 6000 (30.3 %), RM 6001 to RM 8000 (9.1 %), and others (13.2 %). In terms of marital status, most of the respondents were single (67 %), 30.7 per cent were married, and the remaining 1.7 per cent were divorced.

4.0   Findings

The structural model for hypothesis testing is related to the research objective. A two-stage analysis was adopted in this study that consists of measurement and structural models. The measurement

model was established first before analysing the structural model. The measurement model analyses the individual loading of each item, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. This is to test the reliability and validity of the measures before assessing the structural model. The structural model applies the bootstrapping method to determine the significance level of weights, path coefficient, and loadings (Hair et al., 2013).

4.1   Assessment of Measurement Model

In the assessment of the measurement model, the reflective constructs were evaluated to determine the acceptance of the reliability and validity of the constructs. Table 1 shows that the composite reliability values of all constructs in the study exceeded the 0.7 thresholds, as suggested by Hair et al. (2013).

Table 1 : Measurement Model Evaluation

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE
Advertising Intent (Adopted from Zhu & Tan, 2007)	The blog has a commercial purpose.	0.639– 0.820	0.820	0.535
	The blog contains marketing elements.			
	The blog tries to persuade me to try or buy the product.			
	The blog author has been paid to review the product.			
	The blog author has been paid to review the product.			
	Advertising messages are clear in the blog.			
	The post about the product sounds like an advertisement.			

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE
Experience goods (Adopted from Moon et al., 2008)	The quality of [product] can be judged by web-based information	0.880 – 0.917	0.894	0.808
	The quality of [product] can be judged without physical examination.			
	The quality of [product] can be judged without trial use.			
Brand Awareness (Adapted from Sasmita & Suki, 2015)	I aware this product/brand that appeared in the blog.	0.948 – 0.960	0.968	0.911
	I can recognise this product/brand in comparison with the other competing product/brand that appeared in the blog.			
	I know how this product/brand looks like.			
Perceived Credibility (Adopted from Moon et al., 2008)	I feel that the claims made in XXX blog content are credible.	0.969 - 0.968	0.968	0.938
	The blog content in XXX are credible.			
	I think the blog content in the XXX are exaggerated.			
	I think the blog content in the XXX are unbelievable.			
Perceived Usefulness (Adapted from Järveläinen, 2004)	The blog content makes it easier to search for and purchase products.	0.735 – 0.895	0.875	0.702
	The blog content enables me to search and buy products faster.			
	The blog content is useful since I can use it at any time suitable for me.			
	The blog content gives me greater control.			
	The blog content would save me money when purchasing products.			
	The blog content would save me time when purchasing products.			

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE
Attitude Towards Sponsored Recommended Post (Adopted from Lu et al., 2014)	I find the blog content useful in purchasing products.	0.906 – 0.930	0.940	0.839
	I think this article tells the truth.			
	I do not believe in what the blogger wrote in this article. (Reverse Item)			
	I can learn the real product information from this article.			
	After reading this article, I have been accurately informed about the product information.			
Purchase Intention (Adapted from Lu et al., 2014)	I would consider buying this beauty and cosmetic product.	0.770 – 0.908	0.917	0.736
	I have no intention to buy this beauty and cosmetic product. (Reverse Item)			
	It is possible that I would buy this beauty and cosmetic product.			
	I will purchase this (brand) the next time I need a (beauty and cosmetic product).			
	PI5: If I am in need, I would buy this (beauty and cosmetic product).			

The factor loadings above 0.6 also indicated that the reliability of each item had significantly been achieved (Hair et al., 2013). Subsequently, the convergent validity was assessed. The AVEs of all constructs were all above 0.7; hence the convergent validity was at a satisfactory level (Hair et al., 2013). The Discriminant validity test was analysed by measuring the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) demonstrate that the use of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) approach has a superior performance using a Monte Carlo simulation study, in comparison to the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the assessment of (partial) cross-loadings. By

referring to the ratio of Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) in Table 2, all variables in the model were accepted. The rule of thumb for a variable in a model to be accepted is that it has to be below 0.90 (Gold et al. 2001).

Table 2 : Discriminant Validity

	AI	ATT	BA	PC	PI	PT	PU
Advertising Intent (AI)							
Attitude (ATT)	0.433						
Brand Awareness (BA)	0.148	0.513					
Perceived Credibility (PC)	0.345	0.808	0.475				
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.432	0.894	0.459	0.748			
Experience goods (PT)	0.365	0.116	0.052	0.067	0.1		
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.433	0.804	0.426	0.742	0.876	0.187	

4.2   Assessment of Structural Model

The goal of the assessment of the structural model of this study was to investigate the inter-relationships between advertising intent, experience goods, brand awareness, perceived credibility, and perceived usefulness and purchase intention, as well as the mediation effects of attitude. The assessments include the path of coefficient estimates and R^2, where these were conducted to determine the power of prediction of the model (Hair et al., 2013). The Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) index for this study was 0.711 (> 0.36), indicating that the model was a good fit. Cross-validate redundancy value was computed based on a blindfolding process in PLS, as suggested by Chin (2010). The results demonstrated that the capability values for all exogenous variables are above zero, signifying that the model had significant predictive relevance and achieved a good fit. Based on Table 3, all paths were significant leading from advertising intent, brand awareness, perceived credibility, perceived usefulness towards purchase intention (path coefficient = - 0.096, 0.114, 0.343, 0.257, $p <$ 0.01 respectively). Hence, the results support H1, H3, H4 and H5. On the other hand, the path coefficients were negative and insignificant from experience goods to purchase intention (path coefficient = -.001, $p >$ 0.05). Hence, the finding does not support H2.

Table 3 : Path Analysis Results

Hypo thesis	Path	Coefficient	t value	Decision
H1	Advertising Intent -> Purchase Intention	-.0096	2.181	Supported
H2	Experience goods -> Purchase Intention	-.001	0.25	Not Supported
H3	Brand Awareness -> Purchase Intention	0.114	2.407	Supported
H4	Perceived Credibility -> Purchase Intention	0.343	5.123	Supported
H5	Perceived Usefulness -> Purchase Intention	0.257	4.028	Supported

The bootstrapping procedure did mediation testing in this study. For mediation, the two-tailed test was used and compared with a t-value of 1.96. The bootstrap's upper and lower limits (bias-corrected 95 % confidence interval) should be considered. The study concluded a mediation effect when the values between bootstrap's upper and lower limits did not include zero in their range. Table 4 shows how attitude towards sponsored recommendation posts mediated the relationship of advertising intent, brand awareness, perceived credibility, perceived usefulness, and purchase intention; hence, supporting H6, H8, H9 and H10 except for experience goods (H7), which was not supported.

Table 4 : Mediating Effect Results

	Path a	Path b	Indirect Effect	SE	*t-value*	95% LL	95% UL	Decision
H6: AI>ATT>PI	-0.13	0.80	-0.10	0.04	-2.55	-0.18	-0.02	Supported
H7: PT>ATT>PI	-0.01	0.80	-0.01	0.04	-0.15	-0.08	0.07	Not Supported
H8: BA>ATT>PI	0.14	0.80	0.11	0.05	2.39	0.02	0.21	Supported
H9: PC>ATT>PI	0.42	0.80	0.34	0.07	5.03	0.21	0.47	Supported
H10: PU>ATT>PI	0.32	0.80	0.26	0.06	4.06	0.13	0.38	Supported

5.0   Discussion

The result of this study shows that advertising intent negatively influences purchase intention. This reveals that if bloggers reveal that they are sponsored and have a marketing purpose, it will negatively influence consumers' purchase intention. It concludes that the

respondents of this study were most likely not be persuaded by bloggers when their advertising intent was revealed. The result from this study is similar to the literature of past studies by Lu et al. (2014) and Uribe et al. (2016), hence supporting Hypothesis 1. In the study by Uribe et al. (2016), consumer behavioural intention is lower when the advertising intent is explicit than when the advertising intent is implicit. It is because the consumers perceived the content as biased and not credible. In implicit advertising, the persuasive intent is not revealed to the readers to avoid skepticism of advertising. However, if a company attempts to use blog marketing, it is best to include negative aspects of the product in the sponsored content. This increases consumers' trust that the blog review is credible and not one-sided.

The relationship between experience goods and purchase intention has not been supported, so Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Experience goods are not essential for consumers to judge whether blogs' reviews are credible. This finding contradicts previous studies by Lu et al. (2014), Mudambi and Schuff (2010), Tsao and Hsieh (2015) and Ho et al. (2015). These studies have found that experience goods significantly affect attitude towards product information and purchase intention. Here, consumers perceived that experience goods' information was less credible than search goods. This is because the reviews on experience goods are subjective, so personal experience is needed to review the products. This study found that information available on the website was not enough to influence them to purchase beauty and cosmetic products. They preferred a physical examination and trial use of the products to assist them in decision-making. In deciding to purchase beauty and cosmetic products, customers tend to do a last review search on the effects and experiences of using a product before purchasing (Kang et al., 2020). Marketers may engage with beauty and cosmetics influencers, either celebrities or general, by providing products. They will share their experience using the products with their followers. This strategy can be called paid collaboration, in which marketers may organise an event with beauty influencers or meet and greet sessions between influencers and their followers. These influencers offer unique benefits for marketers; they may help marketers reach a larger consumer market for brands which may generate higher returns on their investments (Trivedi & Sama, 2020).

This study shows that brand awareness positively influences the purchase intention of beauty products. This reveals that if the consumers recognise a brand from blog content, they are more likely

to be persuaded by the blogger's recommendation and increase their purchase intention, thereby supporting Hypothesis 3. This result is consistent with the previous studies by Ho et al. (2015), Jung and Seock (2016) Lu et al. (2014), Hutter et al. (2013), and Kakkos et al. (2015). They have found that brand awareness positively influences consumer purchase intention. The reasons are that consumers often use brand awareness to make a quick decision due to their familiarity with what the brand could offer. In addition, consumers perceive that a well-known brand is more reliable than an unfamiliar brand. Consumers feel that well-known brands will not use deceptive marketing strategies, lowering perceived risk. The study by Jung and Seock (2016) has a similar result to this study, in which the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention is significant.

The result of this study shows that perceived credibility positively influences purchase intention. When consumers have stronger perceived credibility towards a blogger's review, for example, the chance of the blog's product reviews persuading them and influencing their purchase intention is greater. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported. The result of this study is similar to the previous studies by Dinh and Mai (2016) and Erkan and Evans (2016). In their studies, it is found that credibility positively affects consumer attitude towards eWOM or advertisement, indirectly influencing their purchase intention. For companies intending to use blog marketing, it is best to gain consumers' trust by allowing bloggers to review the product objectively. The review must be without bias, which includes the advantages and disadvantages of the product based on the blogger's personal opinion. If consumers perceive that the sponsored recommended post is biased and highly persuasive with a marketing intent, consumers will not likely trust the blog review. This may lower their purchase intention. Sponsoring companies should search for blogs where the bloggers are already well-known and trusted to gain a better persuasive effect.

The result of this study shows that perceived usefulness positively influences purchase intention. When consumers perceive that blog content is useful, their intention to purchase the beauty products is greater; therefore, supporting Hypothesis 5. The result from this study is consistent with previous studies by Sin et al. (2012) and Lin and Kim (2016). Lin and Kim's (2016) survey on sponsored advertising on Facebook has found that the perceived usefulness of Facebook advertisements have a positive relationship with product purchase intention.

In a study by Uribe et al. (2016), it is discovered that bloggers' explicit use of advertorial signs revealing the persuasive intent embedded in the blog content affects consumers' attitudes and behaviour differently, for instance, in terms of one-sided messages compared with two-sided messages. The finding of this study is similar to the results of previous studies. The relationship between advertising intent and purchase intention and attitude towards the sponsored recommended post as mediator is significant. This shows that when consumers have scepticism and negative attitudes towards sponsored recommendation posts, the persuasion effect will become limited, lowering their purchase intention. Thus, Hypothesis 6 is supported.

Additionally, Hwang and Jeong (2016) reveal that a simple sponsorship disclosure will result in a lower perception of source credibility and less favourable message attitudes. However, those who are highly sceptical respond positively to honest opinions of disclosure messages. Therefore, signifying that a two-sided message can gain consumer trust in sponsored content. The study by Carr and Hayes (2014), on the effect of disclosure of third-party influence on credibility and eWOM, shows that consumers regard eWOM and bloggers as less credible when disclosing sponsorship. As explained by the previous discussion on advertising intent and purchase intention, it is best to avoid using one-sided content that only includes positive and persuasive messages in blog marketing.

The study results show that attitudes towards sponsored recommended posts do not mediate the relationship between experience goods and purchase intention. Hence, Hypothesis 7 is not supported. The result contradicts the study done by Lu et al. (2013) that indicates a significant relationship between experience goods and attitude and sponsored recommendation posts. The result of the study also contradicts the research conducted by Mudambi and Schuff (2010). Their study reveals that while experience goods influence consumer perception of a review's helpfulness, search goods review has a more significant positive effect on the review's helpfulness.

The findings of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies, in which attitude towards sponsored recommended posts significantly mediates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention. This reveals that consumers in Penang, Malaysia is most likely to have positive attitudes and trust in sponsored recommendation posts, increasing purchase intention if consumers know the brand in the recommendation post or the brand is well known.

Therefore, Hypothesis 8 is supported. The result from this study is similar to Lu et al. (2013), whereby when consumers have high brand awareness of a recommended product in blog posts, their attitude towards the sponsored recommendation post is more positive, and vice versa. In another study, Hutter et al. (2013) analysed the impact of brand awareness and purchase intention on social media (Facebook). They stress that a higher level of brand awareness positively affects WOM activities, which could influence behavioural intent. A well-known brand that uses blog marketing has better persuasive power over a new brand in getting new consumers. However, new brands could use blog marketing to promote their brand name effectively as blogs are great tools for marketing.

The study by Erkan and Evans (2016) supports that credibility influences consumer attitudes, whether the information is helpful to them, indirectly influencing their purchase intention. The finding of this study is similar to the results of previous studies. As per the last discussion on perceived credibility and purchase intention, companies that intend to use blog marketing must allow bloggers to review and evaluate their product objectively and without bias. This is to be done despite negative reviews, if any. In addition, sponsors prefer blogs with a high positive reputation. This is due to the trust and values that the bloggers have already established, in which the consumers are more easily persuaded by the recommended post. Hence, influencing their purchase intention. The role of attitude towards sponsored recommended posts as a mediator is significant in the relationship between perceived credibility and purchase intention. This reveals that when consumers in Penang, Malaysia, feel that bloggers or their sponsored recommended posts are credible, the more likely the review will persuade them. Consequently, this will indirectly increase their purchase intention. Therefore, hypothesis 9 is supported.

The finding of this study is similar to the results of previous studies. The role of attitude towards sponsored recommended posts as mediators are significant in the relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention. This reveals that when consumers in Penang, Malaysia perceive sponsored recommendation posts as useful, they will have a higher positive attitude towards the post. Hence, it indirectly increases their purchase intention. Thus, Hypothesis 10 is supported. The result is consistent with previous studies by Lin and Kim (2016) on predicting user responses to sponsored advertising on social media. The study shows that the perceived usefulness of Facebook

advertisements is positively related to attitudes towards Facebook's advertising and product purchase intention. The research by Sin et al. (2012) shows that if young consumers in Malaysia perceive social media as useful, it will positively affect their purchase intention. As explained by the previous discussion on perceived usefulness and purchase intention, a company that intends to use blog marketing must consider what information is useful for their customers when they read a sponsored recommended post in the blog. Information usefulness has a direct link to the merchant, discount coupons, recommendations by others, the pros and cons of the product, product differences from other alternatives, or price comparison.

6.0   Implications of the Study

The results of this study would imply some implications for beauty and cosmetic products companies. This study may provide some insights into ways blogs could be used as one of the effective advertising tools. Besides that, beauty and cosmetic companies could use blogs to spread their brand image, attract potential customers, and increase their customer trust in the brand or product.

This study shows that if bloggers' reviews are sponsored and contain a marketing purpose for explicit advertising intent, consumers will have a negative attitude towards the sponsored content. Hence, a lesser influence on consumer purchase intention. However, in Malaysia, some regulations require sponsorship to be revealed. Therefore, sponsored recommendation posts can no longer conceal their marketing intent. This study recommends that a company should not interfere with a blogger's review and should support the blogger to give an honest opinion about the product. As such, this can result in positive or negative influences. However, based on previous literature, honest opinions could increase the credibility of a sponsored recommended post.

Brand awareness positively affects consumer attitudes towards the recommended post and purchase intention. Well-known brands have the advantage of using blog marketing. This is because there is a higher chance that a blogger's recommendation can persuade consumers. Therefore, a well-known brand is more appropriate than a lesser-known brand to use blogs as marketing tools. However, new brands could use blog marketing as an opportunity to promote their products better. Credibility is another variable that influences consumer behaviour towards sponsored blog content and their purchase

intention. As stated, sponsoring companies should not influence bloggers' opinions. This is not to make a review sounds like an advertisement or persuasion. Sponsoring companies should search for blogs where the bloggers are already well known and trusted by readers. Lastly, perceived usefulness is also another factor. If consumers perceive that a blog is useful in providing helpful information, they will have a positive attitude towards its sponsored content. This suggests that a blog's information should contain detailed information, including the blogger's personal experience and the advantages and disadvantages of the product. Consequently, consumers can judge the product and make their purchases.

7.0   Conclusion

This study discovers that under the influence of blogs, advertising intent, brand awareness, perceived credibility, and perceived usefulness are the psychological antecedents influencing consumer purchase intention of beauty and cosmetic products among Malaysian consumers. In addition, this study also confirms that attitude towards sponsored recommended posts mediates the relationships between all the psychological antecedents and purchase intention, except experience goods. This study helps to provide significant insights to marketers of beauty and cosmetic products into utilising blogs as an effective advertising tool to promote and market products. This is done by raising brand awareness via blogger's unbiased personal recommendations or reviews. Hence, consequently improving the perceived credibility of their products. This is because exaggerated reviews will not gain consumers' trust and confidence in the beauty and cosmetic products shared by bloggers. However, this study has a limitation that future studies could help address. This study focused only on consumers who were staying in Penang. Given that they do not represent the overall Malaysian population, the generalisation of the results needs to be cautious. Future research should cover all states in Malaysia to represent the actual population of Malaysian consumers.

Acknowledgements

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