PROFILING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS AMONG SOCIAL INFLUENCERS: PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL FOLLOWERS

Nor Azira Mohd Radzi[1], Latisha Asmaak Shafie[2], Nor Alifah Rosaidi[3], Razlina Razali[4], Lew Ya Ling[5] and Ku Azlina Ku Akil[6]

[1, 2,3,4,5] Academy of Language Studies,
[6] Faculty of Computer & Mathematical Sciences,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis,
Kampus Arau, Perlis, Malaysia

ABSTRACT. *Opinion leaders or social influencers possess the conviction of their followers in making personal and professional decisions. Their posts or sharing on social media may strongly influence their followers' decision to practise some environmental actions in their daily lives. They are often labelled as the current thought leaders among the Millennials. Considering the critical environmental issues faced, many social influencers play important roles to show their willingness to change human destructive behaviours and conserve the environment for the future. Realising their influence on their followers, these environmental influencers relentlessly encourage their followers to support their missions. Thus, the study attempted to profile successful environmental leaders among social influencers from the views of their followers. The study was a qualitative multiple case study on five informants. The informants volunteered to participate and were from 100 university students. They were interviewed in a written semi-structured interview and researchers could reach them if clarification was needed. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Peer debriefing was used to increase trustworthiness. The findings revealed that effective environmental leaders possessed these criteria: a) credibility; b) generosity; c) responsible creators; d) influential figures; e) trust builders. The informants believed that these social influencers are as real as offline leaders even though they only knew these social influencers in online contexts. The ability of environmental social influencers to reach and convince multiple audiences to participate and support various environmental initiatives via social media platforms made them powerful thought leaders.*

KEYWORDS. social influencers, followers, environmental awareness, pro-environmental behaviours

Nor Azira Mohd Radzi1, Latisha Asmaak Shafie, Nor Alifah Rosaidi, Razlina Razali, Lew Ya Ling and Ku Azlina Ku Aki

INTRODUCTION

Natural resource depletion and the rise of consumerism lead to environmental disasters. In recent years, environmental leaders in the form of social influencers use social media to increase environmental awareness by opinion leaders, and pro-environmental behaviours among millennials. Millennials in this study refer to the digital natives who were born between 1981 to 2000 (Fry, 2016). This generation spends a substantial amount of time communicating, connecting, unwinding, making content and being updated with recent events using social media platforms (Dwivedi & Lewis, 2020). Not only that,they are able to connect with society and tend to be the agent of change. Concurrently,they have to keep abreast with the latest social issues and always be prepared to interact with their followers. However, the role of social influencers in communicating pro-environmental behaviours among millennials is not well understood. It is important to identify how social influencers can be used as an enabler for promoting pro- environmental behaviours in the context of Malaysian millennials because there are limited studies on the influence of these influencers on their followers regarding environmental issues (Saghati, Sanaz & Khalid, 2021). Social influencers like Melissa Tan, Deborah Henry, Seri Mizani, Taylor Bright and Shellbizlee can convince their followers in making personal and professional decisions.

They are often labelled as the current thought leaders among the Millennials. Considering the critical environmental issues the world is facing, many social influencers play important roles to show their willingness to change human's destructive behaviours and to conserve the environment for the future (Awang et al., 2021; Okuah et al., 2019). For instance, Melissa Tan advocates eco-awareness lifestyles by embracing vegan food, participating in environmental campaigns and starting an eco-awareness platform (The Green Guerilla). Tasnim Shah, Shariffudin Azhar Omar and Muhammad Nazirul Ahmad Fauzi collaborated with Nuffnang to raise funds for environmental causes (Raihan, 2021).

Furthermore, millennials are more acquiescent to ethical issues and are conscious of the environment as compared to the other generations (Bedard & Tolmie, 2018). Millennials are considered the most well-informed and conscious age group when it comes to environmental issues (Bureau, 2015). However, there is an incongruence between millennials' claimed intentions and actual behaviours toward pro-environmental. Naderi & Van Steenburg's study (2018) indicates that millennials have not truly begun to fully integrate their beliefs and actions. In other words, they are green in attitude, but they may not take actual environmental actions in their daily lives. Therefore, the pro-environmental behaviour of the environmental influencers nowadays needs more attention. We want to know further the behavioural characteristics of these environmental influencers which allow them to encourage their followers to support their missions and promote environmental awareness among the millennials, and play their part to tackle certain issues. Thus, this study attempted to profile successful environmental leaders among social influencers from the views of their followers. The study aims to see the potential of social influencers in making a difference to the environment.Successful environmental leaders are social influencers who can exhibit pro-environmental behaviours and persuade their followers to emulate their pro-environmental lifestyles. Future research could look into the dynamics of environmental issues championed by these opinion leaders or social influencers in order to encourage future generations to adopt pro-environmental behaviours.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current and future societies require their citizens to rectify their self-destructive behaviours on the environment (Razak & Sabri, 2019). Recently, environmental awareness has increased in developed countries as consumers opt for green-conscious products and services (Naderi & Steenburg, 2018). The growing segment of consumers consists of the Millenials. Millennials were born between 1981 to 2000 (Fry, 2016), and they are known for their informative experiences with being adaptable, risk-taking and pleasure-seeking (Aker, 2018; Weber, 2017) as well as today's technology-savvy (Twenge et al., 2010). These definitions are adopted in Malaysian contexts (Abd Majid et al., 2016). Thus, it creates a growing body of research on emerging millennial leaders to cater for the millennials' needs and demands for leaders. Long (2017) reveals that millennials are inspired by servant leadership, ethical leadership and transformational leadership. On the other hand, Indonesian millennials prefer democratic leadership (Mustomi & Reptiningsih, 2020). Similarly, Basit and Sebastian (2017) advocate that democratic leadership is effective to lead the millennials. In developing pro-environmental behaviours among the Millennials, they need to feel attached to nature (Gräntzdörffer, James & Elster, 2019).

Educating individuals to become environmentally friendly society members is achieved through lifelong environmental education (Clugston, 2004). Therefore, society members need to be educated on environmental problems to enhance their environmental knowledge which will facilitate pro-environmental behaviours. Pro-environmental behaviours protect the environment (Razak & Sabri, 2019). As the Millennials constantly use social media, they can be educated through the use of social media sites to encourage environmental awareness among young people. For instance, modern zoos engage their customers using their social media sites to enhance awareness of conservation and ecology (Rose, Hunt & Riley, 2018). Millennials in higher education are green consumers because they are influenced by future- oriented mindsets despite not being financially stable as they will reap the benefits of their pro-environmental behaviours (Naderi & Steenburg, 2018).

The popularity of Youtube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook has propelled the influence of social influencers to engage the audience and create awareness to their followers (Lokithasan, Simon, Jasmin & Othman, 2019). Social influencers influence their followers through strong persuasive content (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2017). They become role-models to their followers by being authentic and promoting their causes and lifestyles through their contents (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018; Puteri, 2018). Social influencers connect brands/companies/organisations to their followers (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017) and cultivate ecocentrism (Liobikien˙e & Poškus, 2019). These social influencers have established their credibility by highlighting their authenticity while curating their social media accounts. Social influencers engage their followers with exciting content on environmental awareness like biodiversity, climate change and sustainability and influence the audience to persuade them to form pro-environmental behaviours. In China, social influencers used Weibo to promote environmental consumerism by educating their followers on environmental issues and asking their followers to purchase products based on environmental considerations (Skoric & Zhang, 2019).

However, there are not many studies conducted on the characteristics of social media influencers who attracted and influenced followers (Ki, 2018). There are limited studies on the effects of social influencers and social media on environmental issues as previous studies tended to focus on the impact of social influencers on marketing in retaining and engaging customers (Hassan et al., 2021; Javed, Rashidin & Xiao, 2021; Nafees et al., 2021). A common theme in these studies is that social media influencers are seen as credible, trustworthy and relatable sources of information that have a big impact on the purchasing behaviours and decisions of their followers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Expertise and trustworthiness are seen as two contributing factors that indicate the credibility of influencers for followers to encourage their pro-environmental intentions (Awang, Syed Annuar& Gisip, 2019). This finding contradicts Lim, Cheah and Wong (2017), who advocated that the credibility of social influencers failed to encourage desired attitude and attention. Expertise and credibility are seen as two enablers that indicate the credibility of influencers to followers to encourage their environmental intentions (Awang, Syed Annuar & Gisip, 2019). This finding contradicts Lim, Cheah, and Wong (2017), who argue that the credibility of social influencers fails to encourage the attitudes and attention that people expect. In addition, research on pro-environmental behaviours also uses various theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Normative Activation Model (NAM), Normative Theory of Value Beliefs (VBNT), and Theory of Protective Motivation (PMT), etc. to explain what drives the followers to pro-environmental attitude. From this, it is worth further exploring what influences the local followers to follow their influencers.

Therefore, this paper intended to profile environmental leaders among social influencers in the eyes of followers who were university students. Higher education plays an important role to promote pro-environmental behaviours in a sustainable environment (Akhtar et al., 2022; Cuadrado et al., 2022; Huang & Yu, 2022; Jusoh et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to profile environmental leaders among social influencers in the eyes of followers who were university students.

METHODOLOGY

The study was a qualitative multiple case study on five informants. Qualitative research method enables researchers to explain the informants' perspectives on the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A multiple case study enables researchers to grasp a comprehensive understanding and connect the most insightful experiences of the informants (Stake, 2006). Qualitative multiple case study allows the researcher to investigate individuals or organisations, simple to complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programmes, and it facilitates the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Purposive sampling was used to gather rich information in limited resources (Patton, 2002).

Five informants were chosen from the survey which involved 100 social influencers that was conducted prior to this study. These Malay informants were chosen because they volunteered to participate in a written semi-structured interview. During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to respond to questions on demographic information, the effects of the leadership qualities of micro-influencers, motivation to exhibit pro-environmental behaviours and levels of advertising literacy.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age
Informant 1	F	23
Informant 2	M	23
Informant 3	F	23
Informant 4	M	24
Informant 5	F	23

The researchers could reach them if clarification was needed. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. This involved a thorough reading of interview transcripts as well as comparing each transcript to generate common themes about the case. Similar data analysis approach has been conducted by researchers such as Zamari et al. (2022) and Mijar and Manaf (2021) in qualitative case studies involving Malaysian social media influencers. Peer debriefing was used to increase trustworthiness.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis produces five themes. The findings revealed that effective environmental leaders possessed these criteria: a) credibility; b) generosity; c) responsible creators; d) influential figures; e) trust builders. Participants were asked these questions during semi-structured interviews to evaluate characteristics of these environmental leaders : i) Why do you trust social-influencers? ii) How do you judge the reliability of the message? iii) How do micro-influencers influence you to increase your pro-environmental behaviours? iv) What are the strategies they use to persuade you to support their environmental campaigns? v) Why do you trust micro-influencers in promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles?

Theme 1: Credibility

WOM (Word of Mouth) adoption is predicted by credibility (Erkan and Evans, 2016). It is commonly acknowledged that word-of-mouth is a potent tool. Social influencers, as potent sources of cultural meaning, play an important role in the diffusion of meanings. According to WOM, this is a must-have. Credibility, which is derived from a social influencer's reputation, is an important part of the endorsement process. Credibility is achieved when followers assume that social influencers had experiences and knowledge about environmental issues/challenges/products. A study by Mijar and Manaf (2021) demonstrated that Malaysian influencers had to frequently update their social media content on relevant environmental issues in order to build credibility among their followers. This shows that social presence and relatable content are important factors that social influencers need to consider if they are to influence followers to undertake significant pro-environmental actions.

Three informants reported that their social influencers had environmental leadership when these social influencers had credibility as illustrated in Extract 1, 2 and 3.

Extract 1	They have knowledge in their respective fields (Informant 4) Shows the example on what needs to be done themselves (not just saying what need to be done)
Extract 2	There's this one influencer Melissa Tan, she is on a journey to a zero-waste lifestyle where she uses stainless steel straw instead of the plastic one and also uses reusable container or bottle. (Informant 5)
Extract 3	- mempunyai pengalaman dan pengetahuan tentang sesuatu product (Informant 3) -They have experience and knowledge of a product (Informant 3)

This suggests that environmental leaders for the Malaysian Millenials need to have a believability factor before they emulate pro-environmental behaviours. This is so as followers are more likely to be more influenced by their behaviours if the influencers possess expertise in the content that they promote (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Moore, Yang, and Kim (2018) also discovered that influencers must demonstrate authenticity, likability, and authority to gain followers' trust. They have consistently provided important and honest information to their followers, thus their perspectives are more credible. A similar pattern of results was obtained in previous studies (Kumar & Polonsky, 2019; Tarhini, Alalwan, Shammout, & Al- Badi,2019).

Theme 2: Generosity

Environmental leaders are perceived as someone who generously shared his/her experiences and knowledge on their social media. The informants believed that social media influencers needed to be generous in sharing and showing them to be involved in environmental challenges.

Extract 4	Gather follower to do it together and do it the way that people tend to love doing it. For example, selfie with clean environment after cleaning it and post it on media social to attract more people to do it like what Maya Karin did last time. It is a good campaign where a lot of her followers take part of it even from different location. (Informant 4)
Extract 5	She conducts workshops, talks and also creates customised programs and campaigns to suit different needs. (Informant 5)
Extract 6	Dengan sentiasa memuat naik aktiviti memelihara alam sekitar di media sosial. (Informant 1) By constantly uploading environmental conservation activities on social media. (Informant 1)
Extract 7	Dari segi cara perkongsian yang dilakukan… dengan perkongsian tentang alam sekitar (Informant 3) In terms of the way the partnership is done… with the partnership about the environment (Informant 3)

Research shows that in utilising social media influencers for environmental awareness, three basic communication processes are used to influence and engage target audiences towards the desired response: awareness, instruction, and persuasion (Thompson et al., 2011). Social influencers publish information about pro-environmental activities and activities continue to input a kind of awareness information to the public. Awareness messages keep people known of what they should do, who

should do it, where and when to do it. Instruction messages instruct people on how to do it, and persuasive messages provide reasons why the audience should have pro-environmental behaviour (Thompson et al., 2011). When answering how social influencers influence her pro-environmental behaviour, Informant 4 stated that it is important for social influencers to share actively and generously because their sharing influences others to follow them, "…gather followers to do it together and do it the way that people tend to love doing it. For example, take a selfie with clean environment after cleaning it and post it on media social to attract more people to do it like what Maya Karin did last time. It is a good campaign where a lot of her followers take part of it even from different locations." This informant's answer pointed out that social influencers used their personal practices to guide others on how to conduct pro-environmental activities, subconsciously input the awareness of "pro-environmental is important", and further persuaded other followers from different regions to do the pro-environment activities with her. Pro-environmental social influencers must also be activists. Research found that the influence of peer recommendations and actions is higher than the information shared by official organisations or higher authorities (Moser, 2010). They either bring their followers for activities or show activism to them at home, of course, often through the media, "…dengan sentiasa memuat naik aktiviti memelihara alam sekitar di media sosial (…by constantly uploading environmental conservation activities on social media)" (Informant 1).

In addition, it should be noted that the methods or strategies shared by social influencers are also extremely important. Research shows that originality and uniqueness are crucial factors for social media influencers as opinion leaders (Casaló et al., 2020). While micro- influencers share their private news generously, social timing is also very important so that they know how to publish posts on the right day and time to increase likes, shares and clicks (Patel, 2017). Through the feedback of the informant, we found that besides originality, uniqueness and social timing, some social influencers will share different activities which they had done according to different needs, "She conducts workshops, talks and also creates customised programs and campaigns to suit different needs." (Informant 5). Although followers are aware of environmental issues, if credible information such as pro-environmental knowledge is inadequate, it will also prevent followers from adopting green behaviour (Nguyen & Zhang, 2020). Therefore, it is very important for social influencers as a leader to generously share their knowledge and experience appropriately.

Theme 3: Responsible Creators

Theme 3 which is responsible creators indicates that social influencers were environmental leaders when they include facts to support and verify their claims.

Extract 8	Research back for what they had said from trusted sources (Informant 4)
Extract 9	I will do a background check first, then evaluate them based on how they approach their audience and on the quality on their social media content.
Extract 10	Mungkin dengan cara melihat komen, cerita atau maklum balas orang lain (Informant 1) Maybe by looking at other people's comments, stories or feedback (Informant 1)
Extract 11	menilai mengikut sumber mesej tersebut (Informant 2) Evaluate according to the source of the message (Informant 2)

Responsible creators cannot talk in vain. Followers will use different methods to detect their authenticity. The online world is now a virtual "real world", speech is relatively free, open, and more influential. For example, Instagram users around the world participate in and maintain dialogue by sharing, liking and leaving their personal views in the comments area. Followers' messages are conversations with social media influencers and other followers, so this will not be the monologue of social media influencers, but the interaction between followers and stories and their narrators (Junior, 2020), or even the communication of a group of people. In this situation, everyone's comments are clear at a glance, which also increases its credibility. As the research found, social media influencers' messages are perceived as "one of the few forms of real, authentic communication" (Scott, 2015). Informant 4 said that she will evaluate how the social influencers approach their audience and their social media content. Informant 1 also said that he would pay attention to micro- influencers' responsibility "by looking at other people's comments, stories or feedback". Social influencers generally allow followers to express their thoughts and opinions online, and they also interact with users in the comment section. Social media influencers pay attention to the voices in the comment section and react to them, which will make followers feel listened to and give them a deeper understanding of the direction of the conversation (Okuah et al., 2019). This is one of the ways for followers to detect whether micro-influencers are the responsible leaders.

Since social media influencers establish more harmonious and friendly connections and relationships with the audience, compared with traditional celebrities, social media influencers are seen as more credible and trustworthy (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Followers feel that they know the creator of the content; they have a relationship with the creator of the content, albeit a one-sided relationship (Lockie, 2019). Followers sure will also think about the authenticity of these social media influencers' messages based on their wisdom. Informant 2 said that he did not trust some social influences because they "kurang pengaruh fakta kukuh (less influence of solid facts)" and said he would "menilai mengikut sumber mesej tersebut (evaluate according to the source of the message)". Li Ziqi, one of the most successful social media influencers in China in the research context, has more than 8.7 million international subscribers on YouTube. She has a powerful communication impact in terms of ecological lifestyle to the audiences, especially the young generation. (Nguyen & Zhang, 2020) She showed her self-sufficient and leisurely rural life in the video. Even though her sharing is so amazing, because her green life involves a lot of work that requires self-reliance, some followers also doubt its authenticity (Wu & Jiang, 2021). After confirming that all these were fragments of her former life, she has received a large number of positive responses from followers. To lead millennials most effectively, leaders must operate with integrity. Informant 4 said he would "research back for what they had said from trusted sources" instead of accepting all information without thinking. Informant 3 would detect whether social influencers would "memaparkan bukti yang telah berjaya mereka peroleh (display the evidence they have successfully obtained)".

From the feedback of the interviewees, it can be found that the followers are always checking whether the social media influencer is a responsible creator. In general, a social media influencer is monitored by the public, and irresponsible social media influencers will be eliminated by the society at any time.

Theme 4: Influential figures

Theme 4 which is influential figures indicate that environmental leaders must have the power to Profiling

influence their followers to their causes. The number of followers became an indicator of social influencers' persuasive power. A large number of followers would be another indicator of the social power a social influencer has.

Extract 12	Lots of follower and have knowledge. They also can act as the voice of the people. (Informant 4)
Extract 13	Yes, they are someone that can give a big impact on a person decision as they can encourage their fans through social media. (Informant 5)
Extract 14	Kerana pempengaruh mikro pada masa kini semakin popular dan dilihat memainkan peranan khususnya kepada golongan anak- anak muda yang mana mereka suka mengikuti selebriti atau orang yang digemari di media sosial. (Informant 1) Because social influencers are now increasingly popular and are seen to play a role especially to young people who like to follow celebrities or favorite people on social media. (Informant 1)
Extract 15	kerana mereka boleh menarik lebih ramai orang untuk menyertai program yang diadakan (Informant 3) because they can attract more people to join the program held (Informant 3)

The current study reflects that Malaysian Millennials perceive influencers as powerful figures who are capable of influencing others through their opinions. Similarly, Yeo, Carter and Khor (2019) demonstrated that Malaysian Millennials regarded influencers as opinion leaders who played a huge role in the decision-making of followers. In line with previous studies, the finding shows that influential figures possessed an inviting factor to influence the attitude and decisions of their followers for particular products (Byrne, Kearney & MacEvilly, 2017). Marketing by social influencers creates more appeal as compared to the traditional celebrity-based and media advertising (Müller, Mattke & Maier, 2018). Desirable attitudes of the product which lead to higher purchase and recommendation intentions can be achieved if there is a strong congruence between consumer and product (Belanche et al., 2021). However, a study by Marjerison, Yipei and Chen (2021) revealed that influential figures among bloggers in China did not significantly motivate customers in purchasing products and purchase intention. Likewise, Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019) pointed out that Millennials were more likely to emulate the behaviours of influencers whom they knew personally regardless of their status as celebrities or not.

Theme 5: Trust Builders

Theme 5 which is Trust Builders emphasises that social influencers spent time to make their followers trust them as environmental leaders. The informants deemed social influencers as trustworthy environmental leaders when they were engaged with their followers by exchanging opinions, environmental activities and sharing their lifestyles.

Extract 16	Social influencer is not like any typical celebrities they have more engagement with their audience thus I can say that trust is built between them and the audience. (Informant 4)
Extract 17	Social influencer has a lot more engagement with the audience thus trust is build. You can trust the influencer as is you are their friend and family, beside they also provide prove about their lifestyle. (Informant 5)
Extract 18	Dengan cara mereka menunjukkan keprihatinan mereka terhadap alam sekitar ….Dengan sentiasa memuat naik aktiviti memelihara alam sekitar di media sosial. (Informant 1) In a way they show their concern for the environment… .By constantly uploading environmental preservation activities on social media. (Informant 1)
Extract 19	memaparkan bukti yang telah berjaya mereka peroleh (Informant 3) Display the evidence they have successfully obtained (Informant 3)

The current study demonstrates that Malaysian Millennials regard the influencers as trustworthy enviromental leaders because they are able to engage with the contents delivered by the influencers at a personal level. This is not surprising given that Malaysians are more likely to be influenced by people who are in their immediate surroundings such as peers, family, and friends (Yeo et al., 2019). Furthermore, this finding is consistent with what has been found in previous studies that trust is a source of credibility in engaging awareness (Awang, Syed Annuar & Gisip, 2019) and product purchasing (Hassan, Teo, Ramayah & Al-Kumaim, 2021). Furthermore, it must be pointed out that trust is a favourable element in enhancing advertising effectiveness (Chekima, Chekima & Adis, 2020). Similarly, Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019) found that Millennials were more likely to purchase a product based on recommendations made by people they knew personally compared to celebrities due to the level of trust they had in the former.

CONCLUSION

In the current study, the findings revealed that effective social influencers possessed these five criteria: credibility, generosity, responsible creators, influential figures and trust builders. The informants believed that these social influencers are as real as offline leaders even though they only got to know the influencers through the online world. The results showed that these environmental social influencers have the ability to reach and convince multiple audiences in social media platforms to participate and support various environmental initiatives, making them powerful thought leaders. This is something to reckon when it comes to the effects that they could make in helping with environmental issues that we are facing nowadays.

To date there is very limited studies on the role of social media influencers in influencing pro-environmental behaviours to their followers even when social media has become more significant in our life these days (Hamid et al., 2017). Despite the small scale of our study, we hope that it will

provide some valuable insights on how opinion leaders or social influencers possess the power to convince their followers in making personal and professional decisions. The social influencers are powerful enablers for promoting pro-environmental behaviours in the context of Malaysian millennials. The findings also help shed some light on other influencers to learn more about their role in spreading environmental awareness among their followers. They could use the findings as a metric or reference point to look at what or why their followers are actually reaching out for them.

The study was aimed at profiling environmental leaders among social influencers from university students' perspectives. As the informants were Malay, the study did not study social influencers of other races. The findings of this study add to the knowledge of characters of digital environmental leaders among social influencers who influence the Millennials. In making digital environmental campaigns and activities, management at higher education can include social influencers to participate in the events. These social influencers can be selected among their students. The contents of digital campaigns should reflect credibility, generosity, responsibility, influence and trustworthiness. In addition, content writing can be taught as one of the courses in higher education that can enhance the graduates' employability skills and as a skill that allows them to spread environmental awareness successfully. Future studies could be carried out to study more about the dynamic of environmental issues championed by these opinion leaders or social influencers to carry out pro-environmental behaviours for the future generation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFERENCES

Abd Majid, F, Syed Mustafa, S.M., Jais, I, Shahril, W., Subramaniam, K., & Halim, M. (2016). A preliminary study on selected Malaysian Millennials: Their characteristics and its implications on teaching innovation. 10.1007/978-981-287-664-5_54.

Akers, K. L. (2018). Leading after the boom: Developing future leaders from a future leader's perspective. Journal of Management Development, 37(1), 2-5. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-03-2016- 0042

Akhtar, S., Khan, K. U., Atlas, F., & Irfan, M. (2022). Stimulating student's pro-environmental behaviour in higher education institutions: An ability–motivation–opportunity perspective. Environment, Development and Sustainability, 24(3), 4128–4149.

Awang, S. F. L. Q., Annur, S. N. S., & Gisip, I. A. (2021). The effect of social media in-fluencer attributes towards pro-environmental intentions. Romanian Journal of Information Technology and Automatic Control, 31(1), 111–124.

Awang, S.F.L.Q., Syed Annuar, S.N., & Gisip, I.A . (2019). The effect of social media influencer towards pro-environmental intention. The Business and Management Review, 10(3), 63-68. 9 th International Conference on Restructuring of the Global Economy, University of Oxford, UK,8-9 th July 2019.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2017). Authenticity under threat: when social media influencers need to go beyond passion. Paper presented at the 2017 Global Fashion Management Conference at Vienna.

Basit, A., & Sebastian, V. (2017). Impact of Leadership Style on Employee Performance (a Case Study on a Private Organisation in Malaysia). 5(2), 112–130.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. The Qualitative Report, 13(4), 544-559. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160- 3715/2008.1573

Belanche, D., Casal´o, L.V., Flavi´an, M., & Ib´a˜nez-S´anchez, S. (2021). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296321002307?via%3Dihub

Bureau, U. S. C. (2015). Millennials outnumber baby boomers and are far more diverse, Census Bureau reports. Author Washington, DC. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-113.html

Byrne, E, Kearney, J, & MacEvilly, C. (2017) The role of influencer marketing and social influencers in public health. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society. 76, E103-E103.

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C. and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. Journal of Business Research. 10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005

Chekima, B., Chekima, F. Z., & Adis, A. A. A. (2020), Social Media Influencer in Advertising: The Role of Attractiveness, Expertise and Trustworthiness. In: Journal of Economics and Business. 3(4), 1507-1515.

Clugston, R.M.(2004). Foreword. In P.B. Corcoran, & A.E. Wals, A.E.(Eds.), Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability: Problematics, Promise and Practice (pp. 3–6). Kluwer Academic Publishers: Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Cuadrado, E., Macias-Zambrano, L. H., Carpio, A. J., & Tabernero, C. (2022). The moderating effect of collective efficacy on the relationship between environmental values and ecological behaviours. Environment, Development and Sustainability, 24(3), 4175–4202.

Cooley, D., & Parks-Yancy, R. (2019). The effect of social media on perceived information credibility and decision making. Journal of Internet Commerce, 18(3), 249-269.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in human behavior*, *68*, 1-7.

Fry, R. (2016, April 25). Millennials overtake baby boomers as America's largest generation. Retrieved from Pew Research Center: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/Millennials- overtake-babyboomers/

Gräntzdörffer , A.J., James, A., & Elster, D. (2019). Exploring Human-Nature Relationships amongst Young People: Findings of a Quantitative Survey between Germany and South Africa. International Journal of Environmental & Science Education, 14(7), 417-424.

Hamid, S., Ijab, M.H., Sulaiman, H., Md. Anwar, R., & Norman, A.A. (2017). Social media for environmental sustainability awareness in higher education. International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 18(4), 474-491. doi: 10.1108/IJSHE-01-2015-0010

Hassan, S. H., Teo, S. Z, Ramayah, T., & Al-Kumaim, N. H. (2021). The credibility of social media beauty gurus in young millennials' cosmetic product choice. PLoS ONE 16(3): e0249286. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249286

Huang, R.-T., & Yu, C.-L. (2022). Exploring online green behavior among college students in Taiwan: A moderated mediation model of perceived compatibility. Multimedia Tools and Applications, 81(1), 421–436.

Javed, S., Rashidin, M. S., & Xiao, Y. (2021). Investigating the impact of digital influencers on consumer decision-making and content outreach: using dual AISAS model, Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja, 1-28.

Junior, R. C. G. (2020). Instanarratives: Stories of foreign language learning on instagram. System, 94, 102330.

Jusoh, Syazni & Kamarudin, Mohd khairul amri & Abd Wahab, Noorjima & Saad, Muhammad & Rohizat, Nurul & Mat, Nik. (2018). Environmental Awareness Level among University Students in Malaysia: A Review. International Journal of Engineering & Technology. 7.28.10.14419/ijet.v7i4.34.23575

Ki, Chung-Wha. (2018). The drivers and impacts of social media influencers: The role of mimicry. PhD diss., University of Tennessee. .https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/5070

Kumar, P. & Polonsky, M.J. (2019). In-store experience quality and perceived credibility: a green retailer context. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 49, 23-34.

Lee, A. R., Hon, L., Won, J., You, L., Oloke, T., & Kong, S. (2020). The Role of Psychological Proximity and Social Ties Influence in Promoting a Social Media Recycling Campaign. Environmental Communication, 14(4), 431–449.

Lim, X. J., Radzol, A. F., Cheah, J., & Wong, M. W. (2017). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. Asian Journal of Business Research, 7(2), 19–36. doi:10.14707/ajbr.170035

Lim, X.J., Cheah, J.H. and Wong, M.W. (2017). The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention and the Mediation Effect of Customer Attitude. Asian Journal of Business Research, 7(2), 19-26.

Liobikien˙e , G., & Poškus , M.S. (2019). The Importance of Environmental Knowledge for Private and Public Sphere Pro-Environmental Behavior: Modifying the Value-Belief-Norm Theory. Sustainability, 11(3324), 1-19.

Lockie, M.A. (2018). In Vlogs We Trust: Consumer Trust in Blog and Vlog Content. Unpublished PhD thesis, Auckland.

Lokithasan, K., Simon, S., Jasmin, N. Z., & Othman, N. A. (2019). Male and Female Social Media Influencers: The Impact of Gender on Emerging Adults. International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences, 2(9), 21-30. DOI: 10.35631/IJMTSS.29003

Long, S. 2017. Exploring Which Leadership Styles are Effective with Millennial Employees. (Thesis - Doctoral). Minneapolis, MN: Walden University.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: how message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58-73.

Majid, F. A., Mustafa, S. M. S., Jais, I. R. M., Shahril, W. N. E. H., Subramaniam, K., & Halim, M. A. A. (2016). A preliminary study on selected Malaysian millennials: Their characteristics and its implications on teaching innovation. In 7th International Conference on University Learning and Teaching (InCULT 2014) Proceedings (pp. 685-697). Springer, Singapore.

Marjerison, R. K, Yipei, H, & Chen, R. (2021). The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention Towards Cosmetic Products in China. Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business. 12, 1-12

Mijar, M. A., & Mazinina, A. (2021). Eco-Activist Social Media Influencers (SMI) on Twitter: Does Credibility Matter?. IIUM JOURNAL OF HUMAN SCIENCES, 3(2), 15-26.

Moser, S. C. (2010). Communicating climate change: history, challenges, process and future directions. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 1(1), 31–53.

Moyer-Gusé, E., and Dale, K. (2017). Narrative persuasion theories. In P. Rössler,P., C. A. Hoffner, and L. van Zoonen (Eds.), The International Encyclopaedia of Media Effects (pp. 1345–1354).

Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Mustomi, D., & Reptiningsih, E. (2020). Gaya Kepemimpinan dalam Perspektif Generasi Millenial. Jurnal Ilmiah MEA (Manajemen, Ekonomi, &Akuntansi), 4(1), 189-199. https://doi.org/10.31955/mea.vol4.iss1.pp189-199

Müller, L., Mattke, J., & Maier, C. (2018). Exploring the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention. In Proceedings of the 24th Americas Conference on Information Systems (pp. 1–10). New Orleans: Association for Information Systems (AIS).

Naderi, I., & Steenburg, E.V. (2018). Me First, Then the Environment: Young Millennials as Green Consumers. Young Consumers, 19 (3), 280-295.

Nafees, L., Cook, C. M., Nikolov, A. N., & Stoddard, J. E. (2021). Can social media influencer (SMI) power influence consumer brand attitudes? The mediating role of perceived SMI credibility, Digital Business, 1(2), 100008.

Okuah, O., Scholtz, B. M., & Snow, B. (2019). A grounded theory analysis of the techniques used by social media influencers and their potential for influencing the public regarding environmental awareness. In Proceedings of the South African Institute of Computer Scientists and Information Technologists, 1–10.

Patton MQ. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods. 3rd Sage Publications; Thousand Oaks, CA.

Patel, N. (2017). The science of social timing. Kissmetrics

Puteri, R. (2018). The influencer and hedonist lifestyle of digital society. The Journal of Islamic Studies and International Relations, 3(1), 1-14. Available at: http://jisiera.insiera.org/index.php/jisiera/article/view/35 (Accessed: 27 January 2020).

Raihan Hadi. (2021, Oct 15). Nuffnang teams up with APE Malaysia to create social impact. Marketing Magazine. https://marketingmagazine.com.my/nuffnang-teams-up-with-ape-malaysia-to-create-social-impact/

Razak, N.F., & Sabri, M.F. (2019). Pro-Environmental Workplace Intention Behaviour in the Malaysian Public Organization. Asian Social Science, 15(4), 60-68.

Rose, P., Hunt, K.A., & Riley, L.M. (2018). Animals in an online world: an evaluation of how zoological collections use social media. Journal of Zoo & Aquarium Research, 6(2), 57-62.

Saghati Jalali, Sanaz & Khalid, Haliyana. (2021). The Influence of Instagram Influencers' Activity on Green Consumption Behavior. Business Management and Strategy. 12. 78. 0.5296/bms.v12i1.18265.

Scott, D. M. (2015). The new rules of marketing and PR: How to use social media, online video, mobile applications, blogs, news releases, and viral marketing to reach buyers directly. John Wiley & Sons.

Shafiei, A., & Maleksaeidi, H. (2020). Pro-environmental behavior of university students: Application of protection motivation theory. Global Ecology and Conservation, 22(2020), 1-10.

Skoric, M. M., & Zhang, N. (2019). Opinion Leadership, Media Use, and Environmental Engagement in China. International Journal of Communication, 13(2019), 4602–4623.

Stake, R. E. (2006). Multiple case study analysis. New York: The Guilford Press.

Tarhini, A., Alalwan, A.A., Shammout, A.B. and Al-Badi, A. (2019), "An analysis of the factors affecting mobile commerce adoption in developing countries", Review of International Business and Strategy, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 157-179

Thompson, T. L., Parrott, R., & Nussbaum, J. F. (2011). The Routledge handbook of health communication. Routledge.

Twenge, J. M., Campbell, S. M., Hoffman, B. J., & Lance, C. E. (2010). Generational differences in work values: Leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing, Journal of management, 36(5), 1117-1142.

Weber, J. (2017). Discovering the Millennials' Personal Values Orientation: A Comparison to Two Managerial Populations. Journal of Business Ethics, 143, 517–529. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551- 015-2803-1

Wu, Y. Y., Jiang, Y. F. (2021). Shenmei shijiao xia Li Ziqi wei jilupian de tupo (The breakthrough of Li Ziqi's micro documentary from the aesthetic perspective). Movie Literature, 3, 55–57. https://www.cnki.com.cn/Article/CJFDTotal-DYLX202103012.htm

Yeo, C.M. A, Carter, S., & Khor, Z. S. (2019). Leadership, Contribution, Language and Shared Content as Metrics in Malaysian Millennials' Decision Making. Journal of Business and Finance in Emerging Markets, 2(2), 153-162.

Zamari, Z. M., Alang, N., Idris, S. L., & Lionel, K. V. (2022). Influencers Er Som Influensa: A Case Study of Malaysian Social Media Influencer Content Development. Journal of Contemporary Social Science and Education Studies (JOCSSES), 2(1), 124-136.