

May I have your order please? The effect of publicity, trust and reputation on purchase intention of the fast-food products

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Abstract: Publicity has been regarded as one of the influential marketing strategies especially for Generation Z. However, the study on the effect of publicity on purchase intention remain scare and understudied. This study set outs to examine the indirect effect of publicity towards purchase intention of fast food product, through trust and reputation. The data were collected via self-administered survey questionnaire consisting 170 Generation Z in Malaysia. Results of this study revealed that publicity positively affect trust and purchase intention. Additionally, the mediating effect of trust and reputation in the publicity-purchase intention link were also established. The study also found, trust and reputation to be positively related to purchase intention. This study is among the pioneers to investigates the role of publicity towards purchase intention of the fast food products for the Malaysian context. Also, this study develops new relationships such as the mediating effect of reputation between publicity and purchase intention. The findings from this study are expected to benefit the fast food marketers and the researchers that specialized in consumer behaviour study.

Keywords: Publicity, trust, reputation, fast food, generation Z

Paper type: Research paper

1. Introduction

Fast food has been a key attraction for the young generation, particularly Generation Z due to the affordability of the fast food product and instant meal preparation (Burningham and Venn, 2022, Yusoff *et al.*, 2022). Nowadays, fast food has become an identical image for youth, a way of expressing self-identity in the modern culture (Saha *et al.*, 2021). Fast food outlets are regarded as friendly, convenient, and safe social spaces for young generation, where they could comfortably hang out with their friends (Burningham *et al.*, 2022). In Malaysia, the demand of fast food, particularly among young generation, specifically Generation Z, is increasing with the rising personal income and urbanization among Malaysia's population. Also, the frequency of fast food consumption (daily to several times a week) has increased among younger generation, who dislike the traditional way of cooking and have a better acceptance of the concept of fast food (Krishnan *et al.*, 2022). Thus, it indicates that Generation Z can be an appealing market segments for the fast food industry in Malaysia. Following this upward trend of the fast food consumption, especially among Generation Z, (Burningham *et al.*, 2022 and Krishnan *et al.*, 2022), it is very crucial for the fast food marketers to better strategize the marketing strategies targeting this market segments.

Publicity is recognized as an efficient, credible means of communication as it is known to enhance awareness of an individual, product, or service and to attract the attention of the audience (Pacis *et al.*, 2020 and Stammerjohn *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, publicity can be considered as an effective marketing campaign and has been linked to a creation of positive brand image and credibility (Lindquist and Kaufman-Scarborough, 2004; Pacis *et al.*, 2020, Subramaniam *et al.*, 2018). In similar vein, good publicity can be regarded as one of the influential marketing strategies especially for Generation Z. (Pacis *et al.*, 2020). Particularly, publicity topics especially on the social media has been a great hook for the Generation Z, the posting keep them interested and become one of the credible information sources for them (Jiang *et al.*, 2021; Magbanua *et al.*, 2021; Stephen and Galak, 2010). In addition, publicity is regarded as one of the most powerful sources of the external information to consumer when they want to make purchase decision (O'Cass and Grace, 2004).

Although publicity as an effective marketing strategy is well documented in the past study (Jiang *et al.*, 2021; Lindquist and Kaufman-Scarborough, 2004; Pacis *et al.*, 2020, and Subramaniam *et al.*, 2018), there is a dearth of research that investigated the indirect effect of publicity on Generation Z's purchase intention, particularly in the context of the fast food industry. Considering this gap, the present study intends to examine the indirect effect of publicity towards purchase intention of fast food product, through trust and reputation among the Generation Z in Malaysia.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The theoretical underpinning and hypotheses development are discussed. Next, the methodology and results and findings are outlined. Finally, the discussion, limitation and future research are presented.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Design

Theoretical underpinning

This study uses Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) theory (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) to build the research framework. This S-O-R theory proposed that environmental stimuli, S (such as marketing mix etc.) will affect organisms, O (internal activity or emotional reaction), which later stimulate response, R (behavioral response). This theory has been widely used in the marketing study for better understand the drivers of consumer behaviour (Islam and Rahman, 2017; Sohaib and Kang, 2015; Sadom *et al.*, 2022; Sadom *et al.*, 2021; Sadom *et al.*, 2020, Mohammad *et al.*, 2020 and Quoquab *et al.*, 2019).

As this study intend to determine the impact of publicity on trust and reputation on purchase intention, it can be best explained by S-O-R. For this study, publicity served as a stimulus (S), trust and reputation as an organism (O) and purchase intention as a response (R). Past research have conceptualized publicity (Min *et al.*, 2019) as “stimuli, trust as an “organism” (Zhu *et al.*, 2020) and buying intention as response (Min *et al.*, 2019; Zhu *et al.*, 2020). Thus, the use of S-O-R theory is deemed appropriate for this study.

In this study, it is expected that publicity (stimuli) to positively affect trust and intention (organism) which lead to purchase intention (response).

Publicity and trust

Publicity can be defined as the “information that comes from public, confidently interpreted, and reasonably trusted sources to increase media visibility, awareness, or interest for an agency, good, service, celebrity, or cause” (Pacis *et al.*, 2020). Trust can be defined as customer's belief in the reliability and goodwill of a relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Several past research has discussed on the positive association between publicity and trust. Specifically, good publicity will create a positive brand image, provide credible information and enhance the trustworthiness of the individuals towards the brands (Pacis *et al.*, 2020; Stammerjohn *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, favourable publicity is mentioned to increase source credibility and heading off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events (O'Casey and Grace, 2004; Singh and Pandey, 2017), thus it is expected to increase individuals trust towards the products or services. Nonetheless, there is dearth of research has been considered the relationship between publicity and trust. Thus, considering this gap and grounded in the previous discussion, the following relationship is developed:

H1. Publicity positively affect trust

Publicity and reputation

“A reputation is part of an institution or organization’s intangible assets (invisible assets), which refers to the public view of its character or quality” (Mustofa and Kurnia, 2021). Pacis *et al.* (2020) mentioned that good publicity ensures that the general public would see a company favorably, thus affect the company reputation. In the same manner, publicity was suggested to has positive effect on reputation on educational industry (Mustofa and Kurnia, 2021). However, the link between publicity and reputation, particularly in the context fast food product is yet to be examined. Hence, considering this gap and the importance of publicity towards reputation, especially in the context of fast food industry, this research hypothesized as follows:

H2. Publicity positively affect reputation

Trust and purchase intention,

Significant body of literature has confirmed the positive effect of trust on the purchase intention (Chang *et al.*, 2014; Malak *et al.*, 2021 and Muflih and Juliana, 2021). In support of this view, Zhu *et al.* (2020) advocates that trust can reduce the consumer’s uncertainty and play an important role in purchase intention. Also, Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, (2017) found an empirical support for the positive association between trust and purchase intention of organic food products.

As such, it is expected that trust will create positive impact on consumers’ mind and are more likely to develop a positive intention to purchase a fast food product. Based on this assumption, the following relationship is hypothesized:

H3. Trust positively affect purchase intention

Reputation and purchase intention

Purchase intention can be defined as “result of an evaluation of the comparison of expectations with perceptions of the product experience” (Oliver, 1980). A positive linkage has been established between reputation and purchase intention (Mittal *et al.*, 2021; Nursiana *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, Qalati *et al.* (2021) has established the indirect effect of reputation and purchase intention. However, the vital role of reputation towards purchase intention, especially in the context of fast food industry is yet to be examined. Considering this gap and grounded in the previous discussion, the following relationship is hypothesized:

H4. Reputation positively affects purchase intention

Mediating effect of trust and reputation

The S-O-R theory supports the idea of trust and reputation mediates the relationship between publicity and purchase intention. Past consumer behaviour studies also have suggested mediating effect of trust and reputation (Aji and Muslichah, 2022; Primananda *et al.*, 2022; Zhu *et al.*, 2020). However, to the best of author knowledge, no prior study has examined the mediating effect of trust and reputation in the publicity and purchase intention link particularly in the context of the fast food industry.

Also, Quoquab *et al.* (2019) confirmed the mediation effect of reputation in the halal logo and customer loyalty in food industry. As such, it is expected that trust and reputation will mediate the relationship between publicity and purchase intention of the fast food product, which is comparatively new link. Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses were developed.

H5. Trust mediates the relationship between publicity and purchase intention

H6: Reputation mediates the relationship between publicity and purchase intention

Conceptual framework

The proposed relationships among the study variables are shown in Figure 1.

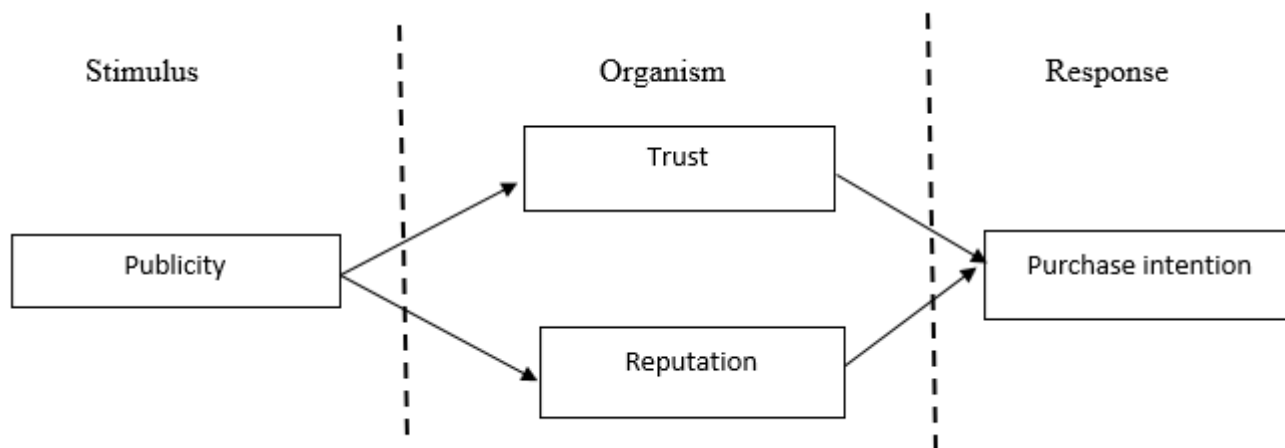


Figure 1 Proposed conceptual framework

3. Research Methodology

A. Measurement

Publicity was measured by using five items adapted from O’cass and Grace (2004), trust was measured by using three items adapted from Pivato *et al.* (2008). To measure reputation, this study used three items adapted from Nguyen and LeBlanc, (2001) and purchase intention was measured by using four items adapted from Joo *et al.* (2019). A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to assess the items.

Content validity was carried out to ensure that the study scale items to measure the correct construct (Cavana *et al.*, 2001). As such, three academician and experts’ opinion were asked to validate the

measurement item for this study. Next, face validity was performed to ensure that questionnaire was clear, readable and understandable for the potential respondents (Cavana *et al.*, 2001). To ensure face validity, questionnaires were distributed to 10 postgraduate students.

B. Sample and data collection

Non-probability judgmental sampling was used to collect data from Generation Z (born between 1997 to 2012). Specifically, the population of interest is Generation Z in Malaysia who had consume fast food product or have heard about the fast food product before. The selection of this Generation Z in Malaysia is justifiable considering Generation Z in Malaysia is currently the largest age group, representing 29% of the overall population (Tjiptono *et al.*, 2020). Also, this age group also said to prefer to consume fast food frequently compared to other generation (Saha *et al.*, 2021).

A web-based survey was designed to collect the data. The application of online survey is can be considered as appropriate especially for data collection pertaining to respondents' perception, attitude and behavioural intention (Evans and Mathur, 2005; Tihamiyu *et al.*, 2020). The sample size of this study was determined by using the rule of thumbs suggested by Hair *et al.* (2010) which is 10 respondents for each item. Thus, this study required 150 (15 x 10) respondents. In total, 200 questionnaires were distributed and eventually, 170 questionnaires were found usable for further analysis.

4. Results and findings

A. Respondents profile

Based on Table 1, 70% of the respondents were female. The majority of the respondents were Malay (64.1%), while remaining is Indian (28.8%) and Chinese (7.1%). In terms of level of education, 80.6% have diploma while remaining have bachelor degree (15.9%), foundation/ pre-diploma (2.35%) and master degree (1.17%). In regards to monthly income, more than half of the respondents have monthly income of below than RM2000 (55.7%). The remaining is RM2001-3000 (34.2%), RM 3001-4000 (8.83%), RM 4001-5000(0.59%) and Above RM5000 (0.59%).

Table 1. A demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variables	No of respondents =170	(%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	51	30
Female	119	70
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Malay	109	64.1
Indian	49	28.8
Chinese	12	7.1
<i>Education</i>		
Foundation/ Pre-Diploma	4	2.35
Diploma	137	80.6
Bachelor Degree	27	15.9
Master Degree	2	1.17
<i>Monthly income</i>		
Below 2000	95	55.7
RM2001-3000	58	34.2
RM3001-4000	15	8.83
RM4001-5000	1	0.59
Above RM5000	1	0.59

B. Data analysis and results

To analyze the data, structural equation modelling – partial least square (PLS-SEM) technique using SmartPLS (Ringle *et al.*, 2015) software was used. The study is exploratory and intend to examine the theoretically causal models, hence, the application of PLS SEM is justifiable. Furthermore, PLS-SEM can assess the measurement model and structural model simultaneously, thus, the produced results is more accurate (Hair *et al.*, 2017). This study followed two stage approach as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The measurement model was first measured, followed by the structural model. The evaluation of the measurement model is by assessing the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Whereas, the structural model is assessed in term of path coefficient, coefficient of determination (R2) and effect size (f2) (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Quoquab *et al.*, 2018).

C. Assessment of the measurement model

Reliability and validity

Reliability of construct can be assessed by using factor loading, Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). As depicted in Table 2, the value of Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) is above 0.7, indicates the reliability of all constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Hair *et al.*, 2019). The loadings of each item on all construct were greater than 0.5, in line with the recommended value of factor loading as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing, 1988. This confirmed the reliability of the research model (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

The convergent validity was measured by using AVE (Average Variance Extracted), which represents the number of variances in the construct. As shown in Table 2, AVE values for all constructs are above the threshold of 0.5, confirmed the convergent validity for all construct.

Table 2. Reliability and validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	CA
Publicity	PUB1	0.665	0.501	0.810	0.711
	PUB2	0.595			
	PUB3	0.603			
	PUB4	0.710			
	PUB5	0.807			
Trust	TRUST1	0.809	0.672	0.860	0.756
	TRUST2	0.824			
	TRUST3	0.826			
Reputation	REP1	0.809	0.659	0.853	0.746
	REP2	0.788			
	REP3	0.837			
Purchase intention	PI1	0.839	0.720	0.912	0.871
	PI2	0.861			
	PI3	0.876			
	PI4	0.819			

Notes: PUB = publicity; TRUST = trust; REP= reputation; PI= purchase intention

The discriminant validity was evaluated by using Fornell-Larcker (1981) Criterion and (Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio) HTMT assessment (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Henseler *et al.*, 2015). As depicted in Table 3, all of the square root of AVE of each construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs in the model. Hence, based on the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion, the discriminant validity is achieved.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	Publicity	Purchase intention	Reputation	Trust
Publicity	0.680			
Purchase intention	0.384	0.849		
Reputation	0.376	0.632	0.811	
Trust	0.442	0.641	0.656	0.821

Also, as shown in Table 4, all HTMT value is below the cut-off value of 0.85, hence the discriminant validity is ascertained.

Table 4. (Heterotrait -Monotrait Ratio) HTMT

Construct	Publicity	Purchase intention	Reputation	Trust
Publicity				
Purchase intention	0.471			
Reputation	0.483	0.762		
Trust	0.587	0.782	0.821	

D. Assessment of the structural model

The assessment of the structural model includes the determination of R^2 , f^2 , and the standardized beta coefficient and their corresponding t-values using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resample (Hair *et al.*, 2017, 2019). R^2 values indicates that amount of variances in the endogenous construct that can be explained by all the exogenous constructs associated with it. R^2 value closes to 1 is suggested for high predictive accuracy (Astrachan *et al.*, 2014; Hair *et al.*, 2014). As suggested by to Cohen (1988), R^2 values of 0.02, 0.13 and 0.26 is considered as weak, moderate and substantial, respectively. As shown in Figure 2 and Table 5, R^2 for PI is 0.489, suggesting that 48.9% of variance can be explained by TRUST and REP. This result indicates a substantial effect of predictors, TRUST and REP on PI, as suggested by Cohen (1988). Also, The R^2 for TRUST and REP is 0.195 and 0.141 respectively, suggesting that PUB can explain 19.5% and 14.1% variance in TRUST and REP respectively. R^2 values are greater than 0.13, indicating the moderate effect (Cohen, 1988). Effect size (f^2) represents that magnitude of a specific exogenous construct on the endogenous construct (Hair *et al.*, 2014). As recommended by Cohen (1988), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 is considered as small, medium and large effect size respectively. As shown in Table 5, all of the effect size in the structural construct is medium effect.

Hypotheses testing includes the assessment of the direct relationship and indirect relationship (mediation analysis). First, the sizes of the path coefficients were examined to determine if they were statistically significant. As illustrated in Table 5, publicity has positive effect on trust ($\beta = 0.442$, $p < 0.01$) and reputation ($\beta = 0.376$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, H1 (publicity positively affect trust) and H2 (publicity positively affect reputation) is supported. These findings suggested that publicity enhance trust and reputation. Furthermore, trust ($\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.01$) has a positive effect on the purchase intention, supporting H3 (trust positively affect purchase intention). It implied that, when the individuals have a trust on the fast food products, it will lead into purchase intention. Also, reputation ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < 0.01$) has positive effect on purchase intention, supporting H4 (reputation positively affect purchase intention).

Table 5. Direct relationship

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path coefficient	Standard error	t value	R ²	f ²	Result
H1	PUB->TRUST	0.442	0.071	6.249	0.195	0.242	Supported
H2	PUB->REP	0.376	0.071	5.287	0.141	0.164	Supported
H3	TRUST->PI	0.398	0.110	3.632	0.489	0.177	Supported
H4	REP->PI	0.371	0.106	3.502		0.154	Supported

Notes: PUB = publicity; TRUST = trust; REP= reputation; PI= purchase intention

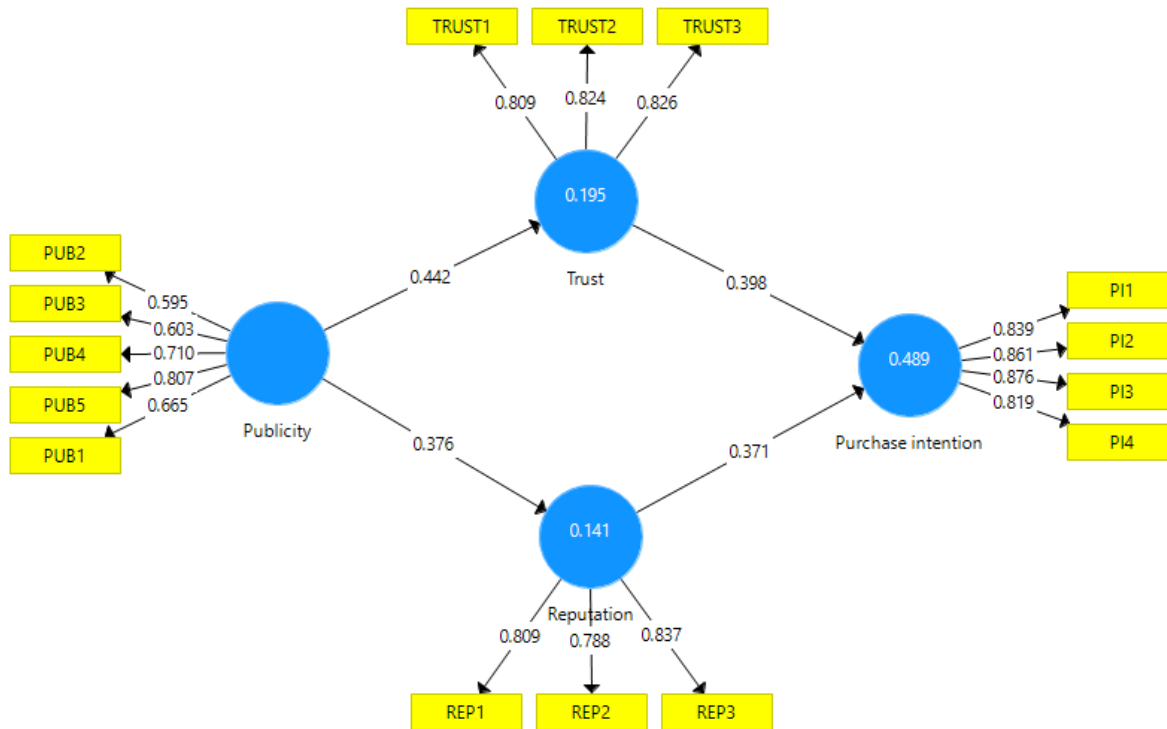
To examine the mediating effects of trust and reputation in the publicity and purchase reputation link, this study bootstrap the indirect effect with 5,000 resamples as suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008). As presented in Table 6, the indirect effect of $\beta_1 = 0.139$ was significant with a t-value of 2.876, 95% Boot CI: (LL = 0.097, UL = 0.268). Also, $\beta_2 = 0.176$ was significant with a t-value of 3.422, 95% Boot CI: (LL = 0.066, UL = 0.227). Therefore, these findings confirmed the mediating effect of trust and reputation, supporting H5 (trust mediates the relationship between publicity and purchase intention) and H6 (reputation mediates the relationship between publicity and purchase intention) respectively.

Table 6. Result of mediation analysis

Hypotheses	Relationship	Indirect effect	Standard error	t value	95% Confidence interval		Result
					LL	UL	
H5	PUB->TRUST-> PI	0.139	0.048	2.876	0.097	0.268	Supported
H6	PUB->REP-> PI	0.176	0.051	3.422	0.066	0.227	Supported

Notes: PUB = publicity; TRUST = trust; REP= reputation; PI= purchase intention

Figure 2. Structural model



5. Discussion

Findings of this study provide understanding of the role of publicity toward purchase intention of fast food products among Generation Z in Malaysia. This study confirmed that publicity has a positive effect in building the customer trust and reputation. This finding is aligned with the past study, which suggests publicity increased trust and high expectations among customers (Ogunmuyiwa, 2022). In addition, Pacis *et al.* (2020) also mentioned that good publicity has positive effect on reputation. Thus, it indicates that publicity can be considered as the drivers of the trust and reputation in the consumption of fast food product among the Generation Z in Malaysia.

This study revealed the positive effect of trust on purchase intention. This is an agreement with past studies that found trust as a driver of purchase intention in a different context (Chang *et al.*, 2014; Malak *et al.*, 2021 and Muflih and Juliana, 2021). Similarly, this study confirmed the positive association between reputation and purchase intention. This is an accordance with the past studies that suggest the positive effect of reputation on purchase intention (Mittal *et al.*, 2021; Nursiana *et al.*, 2021). This result suggests that, when individuals have built the trust and acknowledge the reputation of the fast food brands, they will increase their intention to purchase fast food product.

The findings of this study also found the mediating effect of trust and reputation in the publicity and purchase intention link. These results are in line with the past studies (Aji and Muslichah, 2022; Pramananda *et al.*, 2022; Zhu *et al.*, 2020). These findings indicate that trust and reputation can be established by using publicity, which will then lead to intention to purchase fast food products.

Taking consideration of all the findings, fast food marketers should better strategize the publicity efforts by focusing on creation good publicity by building consumer buzz and online WOM (either organically or

through techniques such as viral marketing campaigns. In doing that, fast food marketers should also consider increase the reputation of publicity by having dedicated team to respond publicly to online reviews and to continuously monitor the brand reputation. Also, fast food marketers should also encourage the online community to create a positive content strategy to build consumers' trust. For instance, fast food marketer could launch a viral campaign to raise awareness on the well-being and enjoyment of the fast food products/ brands.

5. Limitation and future research direction

Whilst interesting findings are presented in this article, they are bound by certain limitations. However, the limitations may provide an opportunity for the future research. For instance, this study applied a positivist approach (quantitative method), hence future studies can consider a pragmatic approach (mixed method) for exploring and gaining a deeper understanding of the issue. Also, Moreover, data were collected from Generation Z in Malaysia, thus, future studies can target Generation Z in other parts of the continent s and country to see the effect of publicity on purchase intention in different cultures.

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