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IMPACT OF INFLUENCER TRUSTWORTHINESS, CONTENT AUTHENTICITY AND BRAND CREDIBILITY ON COSMETIC PURCHASE DECISIONS AMONG WOMEN IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to examine the impact of influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity and brand credibility on cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala. It seeks to understand how consumers perceive influencer recommendations, evaluate the authenticity of sponsored content and develop confidence in cosmetic brands promoted through social media. The study also intends to examine the relative influence of these factors on consumer purchasing decisions and identify the role of consumer trust in the relationship between influencer marketing and cosmetic purchases.

The study may adopt a quantitative research design using primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from women residing in Kerala who use social media and have experience with, or exposure to, cosmetic product promotions.

Keywords: Influencer Trustworthiness, Content Authenticity, Brand Credibility, Cosmetic Purchase Decisions, Influencer Marketing, Women Consumers, Kerala.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has changed the way consumers learn about products, compare brands and make purchasing decisions. Platforms such as Instagram have become popular marketing channels for cosmetic brands. Beauty influencers use these platforms to share product reviews, demonstrations, tutorials and personal experiences. Their recommendations may influence consumers' opinions and buying decisions.

The cosmetic industry is closely related to beauty, personal appearance and individual preferences. Before purchasing cosmetic products, consumers often consider product quality, safety, ingredients, price and brand reputation. Social media influencers help consumers obtain product information and understand the benefits of different products.

Influencer trustworthiness refers to how far consumers believe that an influencer is honest and reliable. Content authenticity refers to whether the information shared by influencers appears genuine and transparent. Brand credibility refers to consumers' confidence in a brand's quality, reliability and promises. These three factors may influence consumers' trust and their decisions to purchase cosmetic products.

However, consumers may not always purchase products recommended by influencers. Factors such as price, product suitability, personal preferences and previous experiences may also affect their decisions. Therefore, it is important to understand how influencer-related factors and brand credibility influence cosmetic purchasing behaviour.

In Kerala, many women encounter cosmetic product promotions through social media. Studying their responses to influencer marketing can help explain how online recommendations affect their purchasing decisions.

Against this background, the present study aims to examine the impact of influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity and brand credibility on cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala. The study may help cosmetic brands develop more honest, reliable and effective social media marketing strategies.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The growing use of social media for product discovery and promotion has created a need to understand the factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions in the cosmetic industry. Although influencer marketing offers opportunities for brands to reach targeted audiences, its effectiveness may depend on the perceived trustworthiness of influencers, the authenticity of their content and the credibility of the brands they promote.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUD

1. To assess the perceived trustworthiness of social media influencers and the authenticity of cosmetic-related content among women consumers in Kerala.

2. To examine the relationship between brand credibility and cosmetic purchase decisions among women consumers in Kerala.

3. To analyse the individual and combined influence of influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity and brand credibility on cosmetic purchase decisions, including the mediating role of consumer trust.

4. To examine variations in cosmetic purchase decisions based on selected demographic and social media usage characteristics and to suggest appropriate influencer marketing strategies for cosmetic brands.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will be geographically confined to Kerala, India. Respondents may be selected from different districts to obtain a broader understanding of women's responses to influencer marketing. The actual district coverage will depend on the sampling plan and feasibility of data collection.

5. HYPOTHESES

1. H1: Influencer trustworthiness has a significant relationship with cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala.
2. H2: Content authenticity has a significant relationship with cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala.
3. H3: Brand credibility has a significant relationship with cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala.
4. H4: Influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity and brand credibility jointly explain a significant proportion of variation in cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design: The present study will adopt a descriptive and explanatory research design to investigate the impact of influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity and brand credibility on cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala. The descriptive component will assess respondents' perceptions of influencer trustworthiness and content authenticity, while the explanatory component will examine the relationships between the independent variables and cosmetic purchase decisions. With the random sampling.

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), Djafarova and Rushworth studied how Instagram celebrities influence the buying decisions of young women. They interviewed 18 female Instagram users aged 18–30. The findings showed that women were influenced by Instagram celebrities and bloggers because they found them trustworthy and relatable. Influencers' personal experiences and product recommendations also affected their opinions. This study supports the present research on the influence of influencer trustworthiness on cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala.

Lou and Yuan (2019), Lou and Yuan studied how the credibility of influencers and the quality of their content affect consumer trust in social media advertising. They found that useful information and trustworthy sources help build consumer trust. This study is relevant to the present research because women often depend on product reviews, demonstrations and recommendations when buying cosmetics. It also supports examining consumer trust as a possible link between influencer marketing and purchase decisions.

Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard (2020), Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard studied how social media influencers maintain authenticity while promoting brands. They highlighted the importance of honest communication and transparency in sponsored content. Consumers may trust influencers more when they believe that product recommendations are genuine rather than driven only by money. This study is relevant to cosmetic marketing because content authenticity and influencer trustworthiness may affect women's purchase decisions.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020), Sokolova and Kefi studied how influencer credibility and the relationship between influencers and their followers affect purchase intentions. Their findings showed that influencer credibility and the connection with followers were positively related to consumers' intention to buy promoted products. This study supports the present research by showing that trustworthy influencers may influence cosmetic purchase decisions. It also suggests that the relationship between influencers and their followers may be important in digital marketing.

Erdem and Swait (2004), Erdem and Swait studied how brand credibility influences consumers' brand choices. They found that consumers are more likely to consider and choose brands they trust. Brand credibility can reduce uncertainty about product quality and reliability. This is particularly important in the cosmetic industry, where consumers consider product quality, ingredients and suitability before purchasing. Therefore, this study supports examining the influence of brand credibility on cosmetic purchase decisions among women in Kerala.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Geographical limitation: The study focuses on women in Kerala who use Instagram and have seen influencer promotions for cosmetics. Therefore, the findings may not apply to women in other states or regions.

2. Response limitation: The study uses questionnaire responses. Participants may provide inaccurate answers because of personal opinions, memory errors or reluctance to share their actual views.

3. Variable and time limitation: The study focuses on influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity, brand credibility and consumer trust. Other factors, such as price, product quality, brand preference and friends'

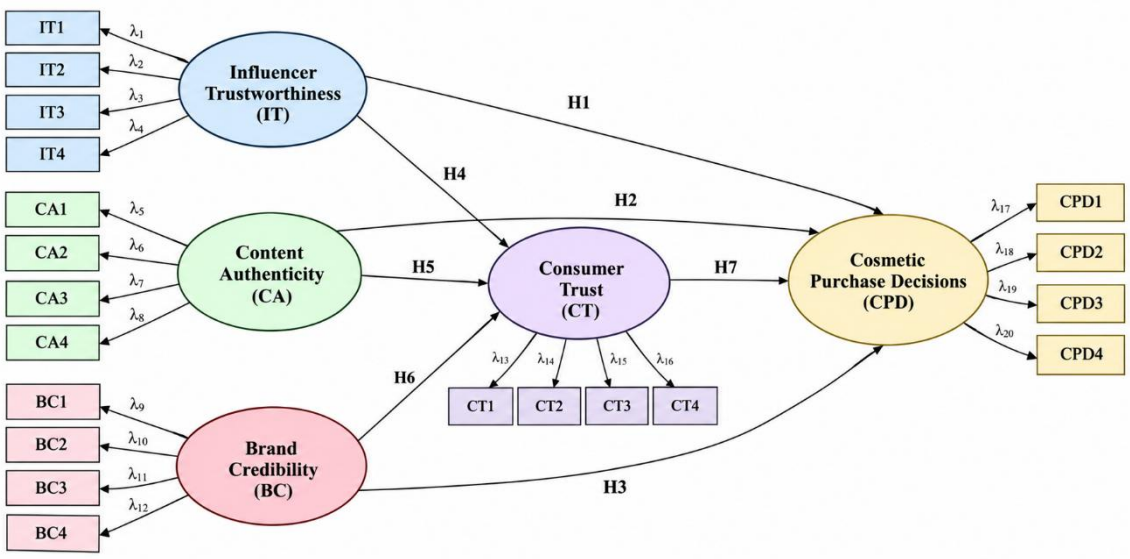
recommendations, may also influence purchase decisions. If the data are collected at one point in time, the study cannot conclusively prove cause-and-effect relationships.

9. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1, Model Fit Assessment of the Proposed SEM Model

FIT INDEX	VALUE	GENERAL GUIDELINE	INTERPRETATION
SRMR	0.062	Below 0.08	Good approximate fit
D - ULS	0.485	Compare with bootstrap confidence interval	Requires bootstrap assessment
D - G	0.321	Compare with bootstrap confidence interval	Requires bootstrap assessment
Chi-square (χ^2)	286.45	No universal standalone cutoff	Interpret cautiously
NFI	0.912	Above 0.90 is often used	Acceptable comparative fit
RMS-THETA	0.105	Below 0.12 is a preliminary guideline in relevant reflective models	Within the suggested range, if applicable

SEM diagram



Interpretation: The model fit assessment indicates that the proposed SEM framework demonstrates an acceptable level of approximate fit. The SRMR value of 0.062 is below the commonly used guideline of 0.08, suggesting that the average discrepancy between the observed and model-implied correlations is relatively small. The NFI value of 0.912 exceeds the commonly referenced threshold of 0.90, indicating acceptable comparative fit.

The D-ULS and D-G statistics should not be interpreted solely from their raw values. Their original values need to be compared with the appropriate bootstrap-based confidence intervals. The chi-square statistic also should not be used independently to conclude that the model fits well or poorly. Overall, these illustrative results suggest that the model may have acceptable approximate fit, subject to the other validity and predictive assessments.

10. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Influencer Trustworthiness: Women consumers may be more likely to consider cosmetic products recommended by influencers whom they perceive as honest, reliable and knowledgeable.

2. Content Authenticity: Genuine product reviews, personal experiences and clear information about cosmetic products may help women make better purchase decisions.

3. Brand Credibility: Consumers may prefer cosmetic brands that have a good reputation and are known for product quality, safety and reliability.

4. Consumer Trust: Trust in influencers and cosmetic brands may influence women's purchase decisions. Honest promotions and reliable product information can help build consumer confidence.

11. SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Improve Influencer Credibility: Cosmetic brands should collaborate with trustworthy influencers who have relevant knowledge and experience with the products they promote.

2. Provide Authentic Content: Influencers should share honest product reviews, actual experiences and both the benefits and limitations of cosmetic products.

3. Build Brand Credibility: Cosmetic companies should maintain product quality, provide clear information about ingredients and follow appropriate safety and labelling requirements.

4. Strengthen Consumer Trust: Brands should avoid misleading advertisements, disclose paid promotions clearly and respond promptly to customer questions and complaints.

12. CONCLUSION

Social media influencers play an important role in promoting cosmetic products among women consumers. Influencer trustworthiness, content authenticity and brand credibility may influence consumers' confidence and purchase decisions. Cosmetic brands should therefore focus on honest promotions, genuine product information and consistent quality. These practices can help build consumer trust and encourage informed purchasing decisions among women in Kerala.

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