IMPACT OF CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CUSTOMERS' COSMETICS PURCHASE INTENTION IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid rise of social media as a powerful marketing tool has dramatically influenced consumer behavior, especially in markets where consumers are constantly seeking validation and recommendations from peers. This study explores the impact of social media influencers on customers' purchase intentions in Sri Lanka's cosmetic market. The Theory of Reasoned Action and Social Comparison Theory were used to underpin the research, providing a robust framework for understanding the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer purchasing behavior. The research focused on four key objectives: (1) examining the impact of expertise attributed to social media influencers on consumers' cosmetic purchase intentions, (2) assessing the role of trustworthiness in shaping these intentions, (3) analyzing the effect of likeability on consumer choices, and (4) investigating how interactivity between influencers and followers influences purchasing decisions.

Through an extensive literature review, four primary characteristics of influencers were identified as significant factors in shaping consumer intentions. Findings suggest that expertise, trustworthiness, and likeability significantly influence consumers' decision-making processes, while interactivity plays a moderating role in enhancing the relationship between influencers and their audiences. The results indicate that consumers in Sri Lanka are highly influenced by the opinions and behaviors of social media influencers, with these factors driving their cosmetic purchase intentions.

This study contributes to the limited body of research on influencer marketing in Sri Lanka, highlighting the importance of influencer characteristics in the context of the Sri Lankan cosmetic market. Marketers can leverage these insights to craft more targeted and effective strategies for engaging with consumers through influencers. The research also underscores the need for further studies to explore the nuances of social media influence in emerging markets like Sri Lanka.

Keywords **Purchase Intension, Social Media Influencers, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Likeability, Interactivity**

1. INTRODUCTION

There's no longer any debate over whether or not to have an online presence, as most customers now regularly spend time online. For most companies, having a web presence is now more of a need than a benefit. However, most businesses confront substantial difficulties when venturing into the internet world (Wang, Wang, & Wang, 2018). It's common knowledge that people exercise discretion when it comes to their habitual behaviors. Each and every day, consumers make countless selections about what to buy (Kotler, 2012). This purchase decision is the result of careful thought given to numerous factors, including wishes and necessities (Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016). A person's social circle, including their friends, coworkers, and family, can have a significant impact on their purchasing decisions. It has become increasingly obvious in recent years that influential people on social media can have an impact on whether or not a consumer makes a purchase.

There is a continuous need for growth and change in response to the ever-evolving nature of the internet world. The benefits of shifting from conventional to online media advertising have been recognized by several businesses. As a result, businesses began investing more money in influencer marketing and other forms of social media advertising. Linqia showed that in 2017, 86% of marketers engaged in influencer marketing, with 92% finding it effective. The fact that influencer marketing keeps getting more and more popular shows that it's here to stay as a serious element of the marketing mix. Everyone's access to news has shifted since the rise of social media platforms. When it comes to reaching new consumers and informing existing ones, social media platforms are second only to traditional news outlets (Jin, et al., 2019). Before the broad use of social media platforms, businesses relied on more traditional ways to disseminate information about their products, and consumers accepted this information without question. It has always been important for businesses to provide superior products and services, but now that customers can join the dialogue by posting reviews online, it is more crucial than ever. It is estimated that more than half of the world's population is currently using some type of social media (Chetioui, Benlafqih, & Lebdaoui, 2020) making it simple for firms to disseminate information about their products to clients. Customers are less likely to trust companies than they once were and are more likely to trust the opinions of their peers when it comes to evaluating the quality of a company's products and services (Lamberton & Andrew, 2016). Customers want to know what other people think of a product or service before they commit to buying it, so they look for reviews and comments online. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as business pages and marketplaces like Taobao, Alibaba, and Amazon, are where customers are most comfortable leaving feedback and posting product evaluations. Such feedback can influence both new customers' purchasing decisions and the opinions of current ones. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that new users are more likely to trust consumer and third-party reviews (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Influencer marketing is a novel approach that calls for innovative strategies for getting your message out. According to research by Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted (2018), the influencer marketing model will be distinct from more conventional approaches like celebrity spokesperson campaigns. To be successful with this strategy, brands will need to rethink their approaches to communication and selecting brand influencers (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018). Persuasive communication success should be measured by more than just how far a message travels thanks to an influencer. Selecting the opinion leader who's popular, trustworthy and holds high value can greatly enhance the impact of a message. Therefore advertisers face the challenge of finding an influencer who's not effective but also suitable, for promoting their product (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

The study focuses on the impact of media and the popularity of social media influencers, in the cosmetics industry in Sri Lanka. Social media platforms have become tools for marketing allowing brands to connect with a range of consumers. In this context social media influencers have emerged as figures who strongly influence consumer purchasing decisions. Sri Lanka's cosmetics industry has experienced growth due to changing beauty trends, higher disposable income and increased shopping popularity. With the use of social media platforms consumers are exposed to cosmetic related content such as product reviews, tutorials and endorsements from influencers. These influencers with their following and persuasive abilities have the potential to greatly shape customer attitudes and behaviors towards products (Perera & Sajeewanie 2020). Despite their growing importance in the cosmetics industry in Sri Lanka there is still limited research on the characteristics of influencers that impact customers purchase intentions. It is crucial for brands and marketers to understand these factors in order to effectively utilize influencer marketing strategies and enhance customer engagement and sales (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2022).

Hence the objective of this research is to fill in the gaps by examining how the qualities of social media influencers affect customers' intention to buy cosmetics in Sri Lanka. By exploring the connection between influencers and customer behavior this study seeks to offer insights into how influencers influence consumer perceptions, preferences and purchasing choices in the market of Sri Lanka.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To identify the key characteristics of social media influencers that influence customer's cosmetic purchase intention

2. To examine the relationship between social media influencer and customer's cosmetic purchase intention in Sri Lanka

3. To analyze the impact of social media influencer on customer's cosmetic purchase intention in Sri Lanka

4. To provide recommendations and strategies for cosmetic brands and marketers to effectively leverage social media influencer marketing to

enhance customer's purchase intention in the Sri Lankan cosmetic market

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the key characteristics of social media influencers that have a significant impact on a customer's cosmetic purchase intention in Sri Lanka?

2. How is the relationship between social media influencers and customer's cosmetic purchase intention in the context of Sri Lanka?

3. What is the extent of the impact of social media influencers on customer's cosmetic purchase intention in Sri Lanka?

4. What recommendations and strategies can be suggested to cosmetic brands and marketers in Sri Lanka to effectively utilize social media influencer marketing and enhance customer's purchase intention in the cosmetic market?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media Marketing

As technology on the Internet has progressed we have witnessed the emergence of an intricate and diverse society. In this paradigm the distribution of information has transitioned from a centralized to a model (Ma, Liu, & Chi, 2018). According to a recent study (Xiao et al., 2018), 91% of internet users use social media at least once every day. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have become integral parts of people's daily life (Ma et al., 2018), as have Sina Weibo, Wechat, and Zhihu, the three most important sites in China. There were several shifts in behaviour after the advent of social media. The advent of social media has altered people's routines and accelerated the rate at which news travels (Ma et al., 2018). Consumers' widespread embrace of social media has made developing a social media strategy and presence an absolute need for modern businesses.

The ever-evolving nature of social media necessitates that users be flexible and responsive at all times. In addition, every business faces its own unique obstacles while developing a social media strategy. Business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sectors have different opportunities and problems for social media marketing (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). It's challenging for businesses in this environment to find a social media strategy that works for both the company and its stakeholders. The social media strategy framework developed by Felix et al. (2017) focuses on four main aspects: social media marketing culture, scope, governance, and structure. Companies can be located anywhere on a four-dimensional scale between two extremes: fully integrated, where social media is seen as an essential component of the business, and strictly restricted, where it is seen as a nuisance (Felix et al., 2017). According to Felix et al. (2017), most businesses pick a middle ground between the extremes on each dimension. When navigating this ever-changing landscape, it is essential for teams to work together across the four dimensions

of social media marketing (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). The proliferation of social media has altered people's routines and the way news travels (Ma, Liu, & Chi, 2018). Due to the pervasive nature of social media and the constant connectivity of today's consumers, businesses must treat social media planning as an integral part of their operations. Even though many marketers are aware that "likes" do not always translate into meaningful outcomes, the research conducted by Vanmeter et al. (2018) shows that many are still operating in the dark and making educated guesses as to what motivates social media behaviour like "liking" and sharing brand-related content.

In reality, social media marketing is too intricate to be handled by a single person or even a single team (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). Furthermore, the results of Vanmeter et al. (2018) imply that as a result, companies and organizations are unable to create efficient plans for boosting significant social media behaviour or determine suitable metrics to gauge performance. Linking to a restaurant's social media page is an example of a token behaviour, whereas recommending the restaurant on one's own social media page is an example of a significant action taken within the context of social media (VanMeter, Syrdal, Powell-Mantel, Grisa, & Nesson, 2018).

Increasing the number of followers on a brand's social media accounts does not guarantee a rise in revenue. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to establish the goals of their social media marketing plan as substantial rather than superficial actions. Marketing managers may identify and target consumers with a stronger attachment to social media in order to increase the likelihood that these individuals would connect with and engage with their brand or organization via social media.

2.2 Influencer Marketing

Social media influencer marketing, as defined by the academic literature (Xiao et al., 2018), is a form of viral marketing in which a popular online figure influences customer opinion using social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and blogs. There is evidence that eWOM, or word-of-mouth advertising, influences consumer behavior more than more conventional forms of marketing (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

Most people will follow the advice of their friends when making a purchase. While consumers have traditionally placed a high value on the recommendations of their peers, the emergence and continued growth of social media has magnified the benefits of peer recommendations by enabling customers to share their thoughts and experiences with a much wider audience. The emergence of influencer marketing is a response to the limitations of traditional advertising methods, such as avoidance and resistance (Veirman et al., 2017), by capitalizing on the benefits of word-of-mouth. With influencer marketing, firms are able to get their messaging over to customers through the eyes and ears of someone they respect or look up to. Opinion leaders, who have disproportionate influence over others, must be identified for eWOM to spread, a fact that has been known for decades (Veirman et al., 2017). Digital opinion leaders or influencers now have the power to sway the beliefs, opinions, and

actions of their followers through their online activities (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

Influencers are content creators who have amassed a sizable following. By blogging or producing other forms of short-form content, they provide their readers a window into their regular lives, experiences, and opinions (e.g., Instagram, SnapChat). To build their audiences, influencers talk about themselves and their opinions on current events. Influencers are easier to relate to than traditional celebrities because they reveal the private, normally inaccessible portions of their lives with their fans and engage with them in person ((Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).An emotional connection with an influencer is distinct from that with a star. Traditional advertising and the use of a high-profile spokesperson are not always parallel to the influencer marketing approach (Xiao et al., 2018).

Using social media, businesses may find important consumers to support their products and services through their followers (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).Finding the right influencer or endorser to help spread your message is a vital part of influencer marketing (Li & Lai, 2014). Finding the right opinion leader or influencer is crucial to the success of any word-of-mouth marketing campaign (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).When it comes to influencer marketing, the decision of which influencer to work with may shift the paradigm between message reach and influencer connection. Because a larger number of followers might potentially lead to a wider reach of the (commercial) message, and can thus utilize the power of this particular kind of word-of-mouth at scale, follower counts are often employed nowadays to identify social media influencers (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).An opinion leader's influence can grow with the size of their audience, since more people will hear and discuss their ideas (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).It is unclear, nevertheless, whether or not consumers take this into account when evaluating a social media influencer, especially in terms of opinion leadership (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).In addition, an individual's influence should not be the primary consideration while trying to convey a message. To increase the impact of your message, you should seek out the most likable, trusted influencer who also has high value as an opinion leader (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).Therefore, marketers face the challenge of selecting an influencer whose audience is a good fit for the product they're trying to sell (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

Finding influential people to spread the (commercial) message remains a challenge. Consequently, numerous studies were performed to determine the most vital factors for choosing influencers. In order to demonstrate the worth of influencer networks, Li et al. (2017) created a diffusion planning mechanism that considers factors such as the compatibility of the influencer and brand, the viability of the message, the scope of the message's dissemination, and the diffusion channel. To execute the algorithm provided by Ma et al. (2018), the study employed the variables of number of followers, number of posts, level of active days (whether the user logs regularly in the account), and weighting among active and inactive days to determine the most significant nodes in a

social network. The audience's propensity to participate with and disseminate the message is consistent across studies that look at both real and abstract metrics, such as the number of likes. Not only should the message be given, but it should be passed down individually, producing a chain reaction of knowledge. It's crucial to consider not just the clout of the intended buyers, but also that of their networks. There is no use in focusing a marketing effort on the most influential clients if their networks are unable to propagate word of mouth (Roelens, Baecke, & Benoit, 2016).

2.3 Purchase Intention

Wu and Chan (2011) define purchase intention as the probability that a consumer will make a purchase. Researchers in the cosmetics business have applied the term "purchase intention" to describe the ways in which female consumers make known their plans to buy and use the products and services offered by merchants. (Wu & Chan, 2011).

Consumers' decision-making processes and shopping habits have seen tremendous shifts over the past several years, regardless of the items or services in question. Consumers are adapting their lifestyles to reflect their desired personality, which has far-reaching implications for their spending habits (Jaffari & Hunjra, 2017). Wu and Chan's (2011) consumer choice process postulates that shoppers evaluate and think about factors such store type, shopper demographics, prior shopping experiences, and store reputation before settling on a final purchase. Consumers' attitudes, purchase intentions, behaviour, levels of satisfaction, and loyalty are all influenced by these factors (Wu & Chan, 2011).Cautious consumers, for example, use these to guide their purchasing decisions by actively seeking out information pertinent to their purchases, evaluating the quality of the services they receive, and selecting products that align with their self-concept and values. Now that we live in a digital age, customers may go online to shop, talk about their experiences, and read feedback left by other buyers. The cosmetics sector, like many others, has had to adapt to the new reality. Companies in the cosmetics industry are under pressure from rising market size and consumer demand to improve product satisfaction via innovation and a deeper understanding of customer wants and needs (Eze, Tan, & Yeo, 2012). Eze et al. (2012) found that modern customers have a sophisticated understanding of what they need from a product before making a purchase. To ensure the product meets their requirements, they would look it up online. To this end, businesses should be cognizant of the need for an efficient integrated marketing effort to disseminate information about their products, be it through ads or clear labels.

The advent of the internet, however, has also brought about a more open and honest method of interaction between businesses and their customers. If a client develops a favourable impression of a product after using it and finding it satisfying, he or she is more likely to make more purchases and recommend the product to others (Wu & Chan, 2011). This desire develops into a need to tell one's loved ones and pals about the occasion (Wu & Chan, 2011). Ultimately, individuals will be inspired to engage in social commerce when they have faith in the market (Hassan, Iqba, & Khanum, 2018). If the marketplace is able to

earn people's confidence, then we may expect to see widespread adoption of social commerce. Individuals' willingness to purchase online and their views of the risks involved can both benefit from increased trust in the marketplace (Hassan et al., 2018). According to research by Samuel and Chandra (2014), customers' evaluations of their trust in a brand might influence their decisions to buy that brand's items (Semuel & Chandra, 2014).

2.4 Rationalization of the Variables

2.4.1 Expertise on the purchase intention towards cosmetic products

As defined by Kim and Min (2016), "expertise" is "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to have the ability to make a valid assertion about a specific topic". Perceived expertise is formed when a communicator is seen as competent in a certain subject, has relevant experience, or holds a legitimate academic degree such as a doctorate (Kim & Min, 2016). Expertise plays a role in shaping consumers purchasing decisions when it comes to products. According to research, consumers view influencers as sources of information due to their knowledge and credibility in the cosmetics field. Studies have shown that influencers who showcase their expertise through product reviews, demonstrations and beauty tips have an impact on consumers purchasing choices. Consumers tend to trust influencers who possess expertise and are perceived as experienced in the industry. Therefore the level of expertise displayed by an influencer significantly influences consumers' intention to buy products (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018).

2.4.2 Trustworthiness on the purchase intention towards cosmetic products

Trustworthiness plays a role when it comes to influencing consumers' purchase decisions. People tend to trust influencers who they perceive as trustworthy and honest. Studies show that trust, in influencers is built on factors, like transparency, authenticity and credibility. Influencers who openly disclose sponsored content offer reviews. Consistently behave in a reliable manner are able to establish trust with their followers. These trustworthy influencers are seen as sources of information and their recommendations hold sway over consumers' buying decisions particularly when it comes to cosmetic products (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018).

2.4.3 Likeability on the purchase intention towards cosmetic products

The likability factor plays a role in influencing consumers' decision to purchase cosmetic products. When it comes to influencers' likability refers to their reliability, attractiveness and overall appeal. Consumers are more likely to be swayed by influencers they find likable because they feel a connection and see similarities between themselves and the influencer. Research indicates that consumers tend to trust and follow influencers who possess a personality and share content that resonates with them. The likability factor enhances the power of influencers. Has a positive impact on consumers' inclination to buy cosmetic products (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018; Kim & Min, 2016).

2.4.4 Interactivity on the purchase intention towards cosmetic products

The concept of interactivity relates to the extent of involvement and communication, between influencers and their followers. Influencers who actively interact with their audience by leaving comments, giving likes and engaging in communication have an influence, on consumers' inclination to make purchases. Interactivity allows influencers to establish a personal connection with their followers, fostering a sense of trust and loyalty. Research suggests that high levels of interactivity positively influence consumers' engagement with influencers' content and increase their likelihood of purchasing cosmetic products recommended by the influencer (Yoon, 2018). The recipient's interpretation of information is heavily influenced by the relationship between the sender and the receiver. The method and consequences of word of mouth communication are determined by the connections between communication counterparts rather than the arguments themselves (Yoon, 2018). Network analysis studies using early adopters of an idea found that strong ties, strong opinion leaders, and strong connections all contributed to the argument's popularity. As a result, consumer interest in purchasing cosmetics is significantly influenced by interactivity (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Measurable data, such as the number of likes and follows, are readily available for examination of social media influencers' profiles. In reality, these metrics are often utilized as measures of success and, as a result, are deciding factors in the selection of influencers as brand ambassadors. While price is certainly a component in a consumer's decision to make a purchase, previous studies have shown that other elements, such as expertise, trustworthiness, likeability, and interactivity may play a more significant effect. To determine which social media influencer attributes most strongly predict consumers' propensity to buy cosmetics, the following framework was developed.
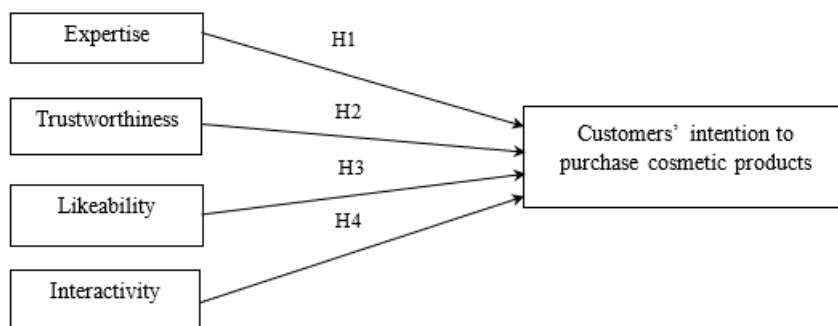

Figure 2.5.1: Research Model

2.6 Hypotheses

The hypotheses were developed based on the theoretical underpinning and factors identified as relevant to the previous studies presented.

H11 – Expertise has significantly correlated with the Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products in Sri Lanka

H12 – Trustworthiness has significantly correlated with the Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products in Sri Lanka

H13 – Likeability has significantly correlated with the Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products in Sri Lanka

H14 – Interactivity has significantly correlated with the Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products in Sri Lanka

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to explore the influence of social media influencers' characteristics on customers' intention to buy cosmetics in Sri Lanka, using a research methodology that aligns with the topic's nature for reliable results.

3.1 Study Design
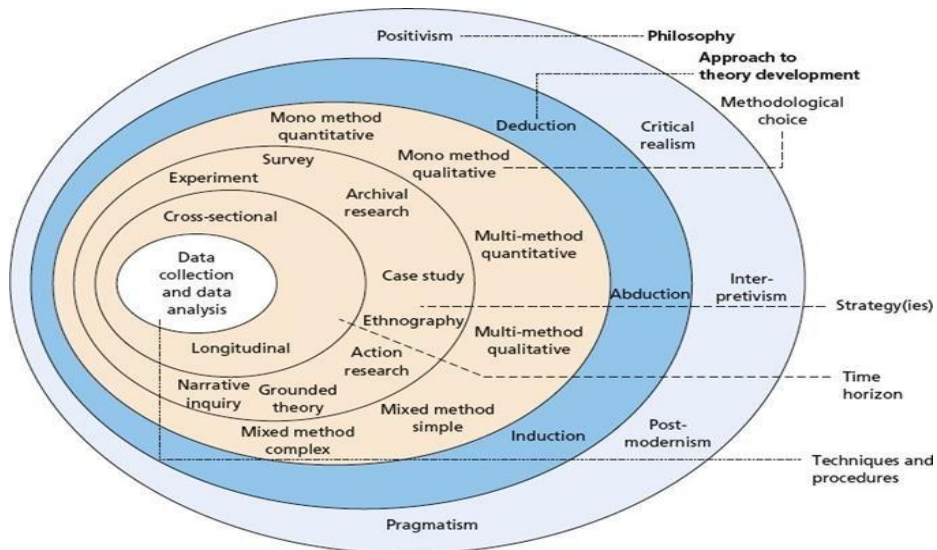
Figure 3.1.1: Research onion

Source: Saunders et al, 2007

3.1.1 Research Philosophy

This study uses positivism as a research philosophy to examine the influence of social media influencers' characteristics on customers' intention to purchase cosmetics in Sri Lanka. Positivism emphasizes objective knowledge discovery and causal relationships between variables (Crowther & Lancaster 2008). The study aims to determine indicators of expertise, trustworthiness, likeability, and interactivity of influencers on customer purchase intentions.

3.1.2 Research Approach

Inductive and deductive research approaches are used to study patterns and generalizations in various fields. Inductive reasoning starts with observations, while deductive reasoning develops hypotheses based on existing theories and uses empirical evidence to confirm or refute them (Tsung, 2016). This study aims to use inductive reasoning to enhance understanding and generalize findings to a larger population, specifically in Sri Lanka.

3.1.3 Research Strategy

The study uses a quantitative research approach to analyze data from Sri Lankan customers, using questionnaires to assess social media influencer attributes and their intention to purchase cosmetics, providing measurable insights.

3.1.4 Methodological Choice

This study will use survey research, a method of gathering data from a group of participants through the distribution of questionnaires or surveys.

3.1.5 Time Horizon

The study's timeframe is cross sectional meaning it focuses on a point, in time or a short period. In this research data was collected from customers in Sri Lanka at a moment to investigate how the characteristics of social media influencers affect customers' intention to purchase cosmetic products.

3.2 Population, Sample & Sampling Technique

3.2.1 Population

The study examines Sri Lankan customers, spanning various age groups, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds, who are influenced by social media influencers when purchasing cosmetic products.

3.2.2 Sample

The sheer size and variety of the population makes it difficult to reliably sample everyone. The quantity of survey replies has an effect on the reliability and originality of study results. Having a sufficient sample size is crucial for ensuring accurate findings. Research sample sizes can be calculated using a variety of methods. Five respondents are recommended for each variable or item being measured, as stated by Hair et al. (2017). The 10:1 sample size to subject ratio is the most common and widely accepted method. Researchers like Schreiber et al. (2006) recommend using at least ten people for each criterion to assure reliability (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, & Barlow, 2006). In the case of multivariate analysis, the sample size should ideally be several times larger (preferably ten or more times) than the number of variables, as advised by Roscoe (1975) as a general guideline. In this study, the sample selection method developed by Hair et al. (2017) has been employed (Hair Jr, Matthews, & Matthews, 2017).

(Number of indicators + number of latent variables) × (estimated parameters)

Based on the above equation the minimum sample size for this study is:

Minimum Sample = (20 + 5) × 5 = 125 respondents

3.2.3 Sampling Technique

Researchers need to understand the significance, scope, and context of their research to determine a sample size and select appropriate analysis tools. Convenience sampling is used in this study, as it allows for efficient data collection within time and resource constraints (Baig & Shahzad, 2022) . This method allows for generalizability of findings to a broader population of customers in Sri Lanka exposed to social media influencers and interested in cosmetic products.

3.3 Operationalization

Table 3.3.1: Operationalization Table

Variable	Indicators	References	Measurement
Expertise	Industry Knowledge Product Recommendations Demonstrated Skillset Industry Recognition	(Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018)	Q2.1.1- Q2.1.4
Trustworthiness	Authenticity Creditability Transparency Customer Feedback	(Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018)	Q2.2.1- Q2.2.4
Likeability	Related to the audience Personality Attractiveness Engaging Content	(Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018; Kim & Min, 2016)	Q2.3.1- Q2.3.4
Interactivity	Responsiveness Collaborative Engagement Live Streaming and Q&A Sessions Surveys	(Yoon, 2018; Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017)	Q2.4.1- Q2.4.4
Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	Attitude towards Cosmetic Products Intention to Purchase Perceived Value Purchase Decision-Making	(Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018; Ma, Liu, & Chi, 2018)	Q2.5.1- Q2.5.4

3.4 Data Collection Method

This study collected data from Sri Lankan customers interested in cosmetic products exposed to social media influencers. A questionnaire survey was conducted to understand their perceptions of social media influencers, including trustworthiness, expertise, likability, interactivity, and intention to purchase. The survey included 25 questions spread across three sections, with a five-point Likert scale for agreement. The percentage of respondents who agreed with each question was calculated.

Section 1	Demographic Variables	05 Questions
Section 2	Expertise	04 Questions
	Trustworthiness	04 Questions
	Likeability	04 Questions
	Interactivity	04 Questions
Section 3	Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	04 Questions

Source: Author

Inclusion criteria for selecting participants in this study are as follows:

1. Age: Participants must be adults aged 18 years or older.

2. Gender: Participants of all genders are eligible to participate.

3. Social Media Usage: Participants should actively use at least one social media platform (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.).

4. Following Social Media Influencers: Participants must follow at least one social media influencer on the chosen platform.

5. Consent: Participants should provide informed consent to participate in the study.

6. Availability: Participants should be available to complete the survey or engage in the research activities within the designated time frame.

The study focuses on the influence and impact of social media influencers by selecting participants who actively engage with them on media. The survey asks respondents if they follow at least one influencer, ensuring only those who meet the inclusion criteria complete the questionnaire.

3.5 Measuring Scales

The researcher conducted a small survey to assess the accuracy and validity of a questionnaire involving 20 women who follow a cosmetic influencer on Facebook in Sri Lanka. The study aimed to understand how female Facebook users perceive and experience the identified factors.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Cronbach's Alpha Values of all the variables included in the study are higher than 0.7, which indicates that the items in the scale are closely related and are reliably measuring the intended construct (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.923	5

Source: Author

Table 4. 1: Summary Table of the Reliability of Variables

The Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability	Conclusion
Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	.861	.861>0.7	Reliable
Expertise	.926	.926>0.7	Reliable
Trustworthiness	.956	.956>0.7	Reliable
Likeability	.901	.901>0.7	Reliable
Interactivity	. 980	980>0.7	Reliable

Source: Author

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics

		Expertise	Trustworthiness	Likeability	Interactivity	Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products
N	Valid	125	125	125	125	125
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.8075	3.8775	3.8875	3.875	3.8725
Median		3.75	3.75	4	3.75	3.75
Mode		3.75	4	4	3.75	3.75
Std. Deviation		0.41871	0.43301	0.41496	0.37856	0.42417
Minimum		2.75	2.75	2.75	3	2.5
Maximum		4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75

The table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics for five variables: Expertise, Trustworthiness, Likeability, Interactivity, and Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products, based on data from 125 respondents with no missing values. On average, respondents scored these variables around 3.75 to 3.90, with slightly higher values for Likeability. The most common value (mode) for all variables is 3.75. Standard deviation values indicate relatively tight clustering of responses around the mean, ranging from 0.37856 to 0.43301. Minimum and maximum values show that responses vary within a range of 2.75 to 4.75.

Table 4.3: Demographic Characteristics Analysis

Characteristics	Results	Percentage
Gender	Male	60.8%
	Female	39.2%
Age Category	18-24 years	14.4%
	25-34 years	44.8%
	35-44 years	20.0%
	45-54 years	17.6%
	55 and above	3.2%
Education Level	High School or Equivalent	44.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	20.0%
	Master's Degree or Higher	31.2%
	Prefer not to say	4.8%

Occupation	Student	20.0%
	Employed (Full-time)	28.8%
	Employed (Part-time)	32.8%
	Self-employed / Entrepreneur	15.2%
	Unemployed	3.2%
Do you currently use cosmetic products?	Yes	75.2%
	No	24.8%
How frequently do you purchase cosmetic products?	Very frequently (several times a month)	19.2%
	Frequently (once a month)	30.4%
	Occasionally (a few times a year)	28.0%
	Rarely (once a year or less)	20.0%
	Never	2.4%
How often do you follow social media influencers for beauty and cosmetic related content	Daily	17.6%
	Several times a week	56.8%
	Once a week	22.4%
	Occasionally	3.2%

Table 4.4: Correlation of Expertise

		Expertise	Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	1	.876
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	125	125
Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	Pearson Correlation	.876	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	125	125

Source: Author

Table 4.5: Correlation of Trustworthiness

		Trustworthiness	Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	1	.758
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	125	125
Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	Pearson Correlation	.758	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	125	125

Source: Author

Table 4.6: Correlation of Likeability

		Likeability	Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products
Likeability	Pearson Correlation	1	.978
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	125	125
Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	Pearson Correlation	.978	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	125	125

Source: Author

Table 4.7: Correlation of Interactivity

		Interactivity	Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products
Interactivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.897
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	125	125
Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products	Pearson Correlation	.897	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	125	125

Source: Author

Table 4.8: Multiple Regression Analysis: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.163	1.168		4.420	.000
	Expertise	.054	.107	.054	3.507	.003
	Trustworthiness	.020	.110	.021	6.184	.004
	Likeability	.082	.123	.081	3.670	.044
	Interactivity	.217	.126	.194	7.725	.008

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intension Towards Cosmetic Products

The t-values and significance levels for each predictor (Expertise, Trustworthiness, Likeability, and Interactivity) demonstrate their statistical significance in predicting "Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products." Trustworthiness and Interactivity stand out as strong predictors with higher t-values, indicating their notable influence on purchase intention. Likeability, while statistically significant, appears to have a comparatively weaker impact. In summary, all predictors play a significant role in predicting purchase intention, with Trustworthiness and Interactivity being particularly influential. The mention of "Demographic Analysis" hints at further data exploration based on demographic factors, although specific details are not provided.

Table 4.9: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.894a	.838	.003	.42477	2.061

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interactivity, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Likeability

b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products

The multiple correlation coefficient (R value) for this model is 0.894, indicating a strong positive linear association between the dependent variable (Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products) and the combined predictors (Interactivity, Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Likeability). This R value of 0.894 signifies a significant and substantial linear relationship between the variables.

Table 4.10: Anova Table

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.671	4	.168	56.929	.000b
	Residual	17.141	95	.180		
	Total	17.812	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interactivity, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Likeability

The F-statistic with a value of 56.929 signifies the significance of the regression model, indicating its ability to account for the dependent variable's variability. The significance (Sig.) value, or P value, further confirms the model's statistical significance when predicting "Purchase Intention towards Cosmetic Products" based on predictors (Interactivity, Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Likeability). With a very low P-value, the model is considered highly significant.

4.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 01

The research identifies key characteristics of social media influencers that influence customers' cosmetic purchase intentions. These include perceived expertise, trustworthiness, likeability, and interactivity. Expertise is crucial, as it influences consumer decisions. Trustworthiness is essential, as it promotes open communication. Likeability is also important, as it helps influence consumer decisions. Interactivity increases influencers' persuasiveness. This study combines literature review results to understand the influence of influencers in the cosmetics industry.

OBJECTIVE 02

The study investigated the relationship between social media influencers and Sri Lankan consumers' cosmetics purchase intentions. It found that knowledgeable, competent influencers positively impact consumers' intentions, as they are perceived as authorities. However, the study also found a strong correlation between likeability and purchase intentions, but refuted this by showing a substantial correlation between purchase intentions and interaction. The study emphasizes the importance of authenticity and honesty in influencer marketing.

OBJECTIVE 03

The study reveals a strong positive relationship between social media influencers and cosmetic purchase intention in Sri Lanka. Expertise, trustworthiness, likeability, and interactivity are key factors in influencing consumer behavior. Influencers with greater expertise in cosmetics are more likely to drive higher purchase intentions. Trustworthiness and likeability also play a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions. Active engagement between influencers and their audience also significantly influences purchase intentions.

OBJECTIVE 04

The research provides actionable recommendations for cosmetic brands and marketers in Sri Lanka to effectively utilize social media influencer marketing, identifying expertise, trustworthiness, likeability, and interactivity as key predictors of cosmetic purchase intentions.

5. CONCLUSION

The study examines the connection between Sri Lankan consumers' intentions to purchase cosmetics and the attributes of social media influencers. It provides an overview of the main conclusions drawn about how consumer decisions are influenced by influencer attributes such as knowledge, reliability, likeability, and interaction. Expertise and reliability stand out as critical components, but likeability and interaction also have a big impact on judgments about what to buy. The study addresses the consequences for academics and industry, outlining potential avenues for future research that include qualitative research, cross-cultural analysis, longitudinal studies, influencer selection models, and studies of emerging markets.

This study offers a platform for further scholarly research on influencer marketing by creating a theoretical framework. The study's conclusions have consequences for firms, particularly those engaged in Sri Lanka's cosmetics industry, from a practical standpoint. This thorough analysis offers insightful information on the influencer marketing industry. Marketing strategy can be influenced by an understanding of the factors that social media influencers use to affect consumers' desire to buy. Sales may ultimately increase as a result of more successful influencer marketing campaigns. The survey also emphasizes how crucial honesty and sincerity are in influencer marketing. Authenticity in influencer partnerships can promote long-term client retention and favorable word-of-mouth.

The major limitation of the study is that the findings may not be directly applicable to other industries or markets outside the cosmetic sector or other geographical contexts. Generalizing the results should be done cautiously. Since the study relies on self-reported data obtained through surveys and questionnaires, which may be subject to response biases and social desirability effects. Also, it is important to note that this sample may not fully represent the diverse population of cosmetics consumers in the country. The results could be influenced by factors such as demographics, socioeconomic status and personal preferences of the participants who were selected. Further, the study's focus on influencer characteristics might limit our understanding of all the factors contributing to customers' intentions when buying cosmetics and other crucial factors like cultural influences, brand reputation and product attributes.

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