The International Journal of
INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

**Research Paper**

# Social Media Influencer Influence on Customer Purchase Decision for Beauty Products

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**ABSTRACT**

Social media influencers have given the consumer a new means of communication as they can interact, seek, share and benefit from other's experience. Today, the consumers especially the beauty consumers do not spontaneously choose a product; they spend time in getting the information of the product/brand, benefit and usability to make sure that it can give them the value that they desire. Therefore, this research will help in understanding why influencer marketing is important in beauty industry; how it helps consumers in making their purchase decision and what attributes of the influencer consumers consider the most while making a purchase decision. It will also help in understanding the role of beauty influencers in shaping the purchase decision of the consumers. A total of 200 responses were collected through convenience sampling technique. Women and men who are active on the social media and who follow influencers on more than one platform of social media like WhatsApp and Instagram were the target segment. A questionnaire was designed with 15 questions. Chi square test and Multiple Linear Regression were used to analyze the objectives. It was found that there is no noteworthy relationship between the demographic- age and purchase decision, there is noteworthy relationship between demographic- gender and purchase decision, i.e. influencers do have an influence on the purchase decision of different gender but not on different age groups are the important outcomes of the study. The attributes of influencers like emotional association and likeability have a noteworthy positive influence on the purchase decision, while the other attributes like trustworthiness, authenticity, expertise and popularity do not have a significant effect on the purchase decision of the people.

*Keywords:* *Purchase decision, Social media, Influencers, Beauty industry, Influencer Attributes*

The cosmetic and beauty industry is certainly not new, but it's an industry which is continuously expanding and generating new trends. One of the biggest shifts in the beauty industry is that everyone wants to receive information in an instant, whether it's SMS or just a notification. Technology has eased the life of both business owners and customers' alike (Hermanda et al., 2019). As social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter pitched in, everyone looked at the chance to share their everyday life through online media. A handful of people started gathering large followers due to their highly engaging content and interaction. Because of their ability to influence the

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decisions of their followers, these people became famous as influencers (Nascimento et al., 2019).

Beauty influencers establish credibility by posting their experiences on the social media platforms and gain a large audience (Nascimento et al., 2019). They post reviews, tutorials or hauls. They have established sturdy relationships with their community and give quick response directly to their fans most of the times via social media. Consumers today do not like aggressive and traditional advertisements that are nature friendly; they rather like to watch out how the products function on real people and what results they can expect. This is where influencers play a key role.

Watching celebrities in advertisements has lost its traction, especially among younger consumers (Pratiwi et al., 2019). Now they want to go on social media and get "at your fingertips" experience. They want to question influencers and get personal responses. Influencers connect to people more unlike the celebrities because they are one among the people. They post content about the good and the bad. Their consistent authenticity has earned them a high level of trust (Ananda et al., 2016).

The rate of development of beauty business in India is fast, with future rate also being bright because of new product launches catering to consumers' unique requirements. According to Statista reports, the industry will reach 20 billion dollars by 2025 with 15-20% of annual growth. Women are the main focus for beauty brands. It makes perfect sense for the brands to have influencers for their products and services to gain most of the customers in this age of social media.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the review papers speak about vloggers as people tend to grab the hedonic value than just the information content on the brand pages. The impact of product reviews on Youtube by beauty vloggers on purchase intention for drugstore makeup products was conducted on undergraduate students in Indonesia. Variables like Expertise, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness from model of Source Credibility were used and their impact on purchase intention was analyzed (Ananda et al., 2016).

A study on the consumer perception and their purchase intention in the fashion and beauty industry with respect to the vloggers on YouTube and their credibility showcases the knowledge and trust on vloggers impact the purchase intention of the customers (Lim et al., 2017). A study on Para- social interaction through vlogs on YouTube for beauty products gave the buying intention of customers to be a function of trust, review and tutorial by the influencers (Lianindra, et al., 2019). Too much content on the same product reduces credibility. Customers seek reviews after influencer vlogs to verify the information (Chen et al., 2020).

Other literature considers the impact of various qualities of influencers on the purchase intention of the customers. A study on customer attitude as a mediation factor between social media influencers and customer purchase intention considered source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up as the main variables impacting the attitude of customers which impact their purchase intention (Lim et al., 2017). With increase in influencer impact, the concept of Influencer Marketing came into existence in the field of fashion and beauty (Paco et al., 2017). The consumers favorable attitude towards is attributed to blogs by influencers.

Most of the influencer activities happen on YouTube. Factors like eWOM, credibility, perceived information usefulness, and information adaptation from the Information Adoption Model are considered as major factors impacting purchase decision (Lee et al., 2018).  The role of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, attractiveness and popularity in the fashion and beauty industry based on the products being a low involvement or high involvement product (Nascimento et al., 2019). A Chinese market study explains the impact of Influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention considering factors like credibility, quality, and relationship and consumer involvement (Nam et al., 2018)

Leadership is also linked to purchase intention (Istania et al., 2019). The effect of influencers Instagram accounts and their originality decides the opinion leadership qualities of the influencers while quantity does not. Celebrity endorsers, beauty vloggers and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) netizens are also considered as influencers (Pratiwi et al., 2019).

Influencers are also called Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) (Marjerison et al., 2019). Celebrities KOL have a better impact than a blogger KOL and the reason being their attitude. Customers are not solely associated with the identity of the blogger.

There is a lot of research on brand image and its impact on purchase decision. But it is also evident that influencers impact the brand image which decides the purchase intention (Hermanda et al., 2019). The influencer credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, sponsored content; physical awareness drives sales through influencer endorsements which influence the purchase intention of customers (Nagori et al., 2020). Features like Celebrity Credibility, Reputation, and Persuasive Capabilities also play an important role in determining the purchase decision (Widyanto et al., 2020).

The impact of Insta famous celebrities on consumer buying behavior with focus on the Indian customers and their purchase intention based on source credibility through social media advertising is not completely studied (Hermand et al., 2019). Reaching the right person at the right place is influencer marketing (Nidamarthy et al., 2020). The analysis of which social media is used to view the different types of contents becomes important to reach the right customers at the right place.

Consumer decision-making is a process and influencers are part of this process (Zak et al., 2020). Influencers play a major role in purchase decisions majorly for buying clothes, shoes, cosmetics and, services. Thus, influencers not only enhance the image of a brand and bring in awareness but also increase sales. Influencer Content Quality, Trust, Perceived Authenticity and Product Matchup are the factors that Indian adults consider during the purchase (Tabassum et al., 2020).

*Gap*: While a lot of research has been done on the influencer characteristics and their impact on the purchase decision, there are a very few research done on influencer impacts based on demographics of customers which is mainly considered in this research.

### *Objectives*
- To identify the attributes of the influencer that affects consumer's purchase decision towards beauty products.
- To understand how influencers influence the purchase decision of different demographics.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Men and women who are active and followed one or more influencers in the past 2 months were chosen as the respondents. A sample of 200 respondents was considered for the research. Convenience sampling was used in this study. A questionnaire was designed with 15 questions. Google forms were used to design the questions and the same was used to collect the responses from the sample which were shared on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram.

### *Pilot Testing*

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|
| .919 | 17 |

Using the initial 17 responses, pilot testing was done in SPSS using Cronbach's Alpha; reliability test gave the results as 0.919 which indicated that the questionnaire was reliable and could be used for further data analysis.

### *Hypothesis*

- **H01:** There is no significant relationship between age groups and purchase decision due to influencers.
- **H02:** There is no significant relationship between gender and purchase decision due to influencers.
- **H03:** There is no significant effect of influencer attributes on customer purchase decision.

### *Hypothesis Testing*

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between age and purchase decision due to influencers

### *Table 1: Chi square test - Purchase decision \*Age*

**Chi-Square Tests**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 11.500a | 16 | .778 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 12.824 | 16 | .686 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .055 | 1 | .814 |
| N of Valid Cases | 200 |  |  |

a. 16 cells (64.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

From Table 1, the p value is 0.778 which is more than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis i.e., there is no significant relationship between age and purchase decision due to influencers. Influencers have no difference in impact on purchase decision based on age group.

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between gender and purchase decision

*Table 2: Chi square test - Purchase decision \* Gender*

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 17.172[a] | 4 | .002 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 16.811 | 4 | .002 |
| N of Valid Cases | 200 | | |

a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.75.

From table 2, the p value is 0.002 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, there is no enough evidence from the sample to accept the null hypothesis. Hence, there is a significant relationship between gender and purchase decision due to influencers.

**H03:** There is no significant effect of influencer attributes on purchase decision.

*Table 3: Coefficients*

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.963 | .345 | | 5.688 | .000 |
| | Trustworthiness | .016 | .072 | .017 | .223 | .823 |
| | Emotional association | .167 | .068 | .183 | 2.466 | .015 |
| | Likeability | .159 | .072 | .166 | 2.213 | .028 |
| | Authenticity | -.008 | .074 | -.009 | -.110 | .912 |
| | Expertise | -.018 | .088 | -.017 | -.209 | .835 |
| | Popularity | .119 | .066 | .133 | 1.806 | .073 |

a. Dependent Variable: Influencers affect my purchase decision

Table 3 shows that the variables Trustworthiness, Authenticity, Expertise and Popularity have no significant relationship with purchase decision as the p value of each of the variables are more than the significance level of 0.05. Emotional association in the multiple regression analysis has a p value of 0.01, which means that it has a significant influence towards purchase decision. Likeability has a p value of 0.02. This indicates that Likeability has a significant influence towards purchase decision. Therefore, there are only two independent variables, namely emotional association and likeability which have a significant influence on the dependent variable, which is purchase decision.

Multiple regression equation in this study is: $Y = 1.963 + .167X_2 + .159X_3 + e$
Where: Y = Purchase decision
$X_2$ = Emotional association
$X_3$ = Likeability

## *Limitations*

- The focus of this study is only on beauty industry and only looks at how the consumers perceive the influencers to be beneficial and affect their consumers purchase decision but not on how it's beneficial to the businesses and organization.
- Due to time constraint, data was collected based on convenience method and the sample size for the research was limited to 200 respondents only.

## CONCLUSION

Out of 200 respondents 69.5% were female respondents. The most important attribute of the influencer that people consider while making a purchase decision is trustworthiness. It doesn't really matter if the influencer is not attractive enough, but the influencer should be trusted by their audience. People choose to follow influencers to get the information of various products and beauty brands, to get reviews on beauty products and to discover new products in the beauty category. People prefer Instagram over other social media platforms to get product reviews from influencers as most of the young generation today is very active on Instagram.

The main aim of this study was to analyze to what extent influencers affect the consumers purchase decision towards beauty products. In this era, consumers find social media platforms helpful because they can quickly get information about brands and products through influencers. Buyers are actively looking for product reviews and product information through influencers on various platforms before they purchase any beauty product. It helps them in understanding the product well before they purchase it and also get to know about new products in the beauty category.

The research revealed Instagram to be the most effective platform as people are most interested in watching content on Instagram when compared to other social platforms. We have also seen that people don't go ahead and purchase a lot of beauty products recommended by influencers but their reviews help consumers to make their purchase decision easy. On the other hand, people have also said that their perception of credibility towards influencers does get affected when they come to know that the influencer has been paid for the endorsement, but they still trust the opinions of the influencers prior to purchasing any beauty product.

Consumers who can connect easily with the influencers and who have likeability towards their favorite influencer consider new brands recommended by them and tend to buy products by watching their reviews. Therefore, people believe these beauty bloggers more than any celebrity endorser as they are able to maintain a connection with them and hence, they can relate to them easily. Thus, we can conclude that the beauty influencers play an important role in consumer's decision-making process.

Based on this study, it is found that influencers affect the consumers purchase decision and hence beauty companies and brands are recommended to spend more on beauty influencers and collaborate with the ones who can easily connect with their audience to increase the chances of buyer purchasing their product. As consumers have likeability factor towards their favorite beauty influencer, they will go ahead and listen to the advice given by the beauty blogger and maybe also purchase the products recommended by them which will indirectly help in creating awareness for brands products and drive sales. So, beauty brands need to keep the likeability and emotional association factor in mind while choosing the

influencers as they affect the consumers purchase decision. Therefore companies/brands need to invest in the right influencer so that their message can reach the required audience.

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*Conflict of Interest*
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.