



**Impact Of Social Media Influencers' Credibility on The Purchase Intention:
Reference to The Beauty Industry**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The role of social media influencers is growing in importance, due to their ability to effectively influence. In addition, marketers have identified Instagram as the most important social media channel for influencer marketing, while the concept of credibility has always been significant in the field of influencer marketing. While a few studies have recently focused on how social media influencers influence consumer purchase behavior, research that specifically focuses on influencer credibility and its impact on purchase behavior is still scarce. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of influencer credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.

Design/methodology/approach: Quantitative study was conducted using the survey method. The sample consists of 150 Instagram users between the ages of 18 and 34 who live in Colombo, Sri Lanka. To empirically test the conceptual model, single and multiple regression analyses were used.

Findings: Results suggest that there's a positive impact of credibility dimensions towards purchase intention and the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention is "trustworthiness"

Originality: This research contributed to the current debates about the credibility of social media influencers. Furthermore, this study focuses on the impact of Instagram influencer credibility dimensions, which is still scarce. So, the current paper fills a gap in the limited existing literature on the credibility of social media influencers on purchase intention, with a focus on the beauty industry in the Sri Lankan context.

Implications: The findings assist marketers and advertisers in the fashion industry in understanding how influencer marketing affects consumer purchase intent. Additionally, this provides important insights to influencers in order for them to be successful influencers.

Keywords: Social media influencers, Influencer Marketing, Instagram Influencers, Influencer Credibility, Beauty Industry.

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INTRODUCTION

“The growth of Social Media has been rapid and massive over the years, and billions of people worldwide use it on a daily basis for a variety of purposes. Along with the increasing importance of social media, the role of ‘social media influencers’ is becoming increasingly important, as discussions revolve around them and their ability to effectively influence consumers; while endorsing many products and brands marketers have identified Instagram as the most important social media channel for influencer marketing, while the credibility concept has always played an important role in the field of influencer marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2018).

The common idea about an influencer among the general public is “A person with a large follower base on social media. An influencer can be seen as a person who influences their audience’s behavior. Social media influencers are in specific niches such as fashion, food, travel, fitness, etc. Brands are now increasingly using, fitness gurus, food bloggers, beauty bloggers, and fashionistas to create awareness and promote their products among consumers. Primarily influencers create brand awareness and brand visibility. Further brands can utilize influencers to build brand trust and authority. If the particular influencer is a well know expert in that specific area there’s a high tendency of people to fall for them and they start believing. Another benefit of having social media influencers as a platform in marketing is that the business organization can directly interact with their potential customers and existing customers at the same time, and also collect their feedback on their specific products (Kolarova, 2018). Recent research states that Instagram has more than 1 billion users worldwide (Emarketer, 2020). Among all the social media platforms, Instagram has been identified as the most effective platform for influencer marketing. According to the survey conducted by Mediakix (2021), 89% of marketers have stated Instagram as the most important social media channel for influencer marketing. Further, youth in the age group of 16-34 prefer Instagram as their favorite social media platform (DataReportal, 2021). This may also a reason that Instagram has been identified as the most important social media channel for Instagram marketing because these youth groups are mostly like to get in line with fashion trends and experiment with novel fashion ideas. Therefore as mentioned above these Gen Z’s would be able to direct towards a purchase intention through social media influencers. Influencer marketing has now become a trend in Sri Lanka as well. There were approximately 1,290,900 users using Instagram in Sri Lanka by January 2021 (NapoleanCat, 2021). Considering the engagement level of some social media influencers it seems to be that most of the social media users are enjoying and attracted to the content posted by influencers. Therefore brands are enthusiastic about making social media influencers involved in their marketing campaigns.

Past research shows that with the emergence of Social Media, the way consumers interact with brands completely changed (Rebelo, 2017). Due to the high popularity of social media, scholars are now interested in exploring new ways in how social media can be used in marketing campaigns and activities. Therefore a vast number of research and scholarly articles can be found on topics such as online marketing, social media, and celebrity endorsement (Kumar et al., 2020). Although celebrity

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endorsement was a hot topic a few years back, most previous studies investigated how various characteristics of endorsers on traditional media platforms influenced consumers' purchase intentions (Costanzo & Goodnight, 2005; Kumar, 2011; Premeaux, 2009; Ohanian, 1991; Spears et al., 2013).

On the other hand, while a few studies have recently focused on how consumer purchase behavior is impacted by the social media influencers' influence on consumer purchase behavior, research that specifically focuses on influencer credibility and its impact on purchase behavior is still scarce (Abreu, 2019; Godey et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). A careful examination of the literature reveals that various assessment indicators, such as the number of followers, likes, comments, credibility, expertise, and congruence, have been used to evaluate influencers (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Freberg et al., 2011; Jabr & Zheng, 2017; Lee & Koo, 2012). However, aspects and features related to credibility dimensions of influencers (i.e. attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise) have not yet been thoroughly investigated. Furthermore, the majority of previous studies on source credibility focused on endorsers' influence on consumers rather than social media influencers (e.g., Cunningham & Bright 2012; Dwivedi, Johnson, & McDonald 2015; Guido & Peluso 2009; Lee & Koo 2015).

Furthermore, it is claimed that there is a lack of literature addressing the relationships between fashion leadership and consumer purchase intention, particularly in the fashion and beauty industries (Lang & Armstrong, 2018). Even research on influencers and purchase intention in the fashion industry, particularly in emerging markets, is limited. Despite the fact that influencer marketing has been widely considered in the fashion industry in recent years (Chetioui, Benlafqih & Lebdaoui, 2021). As a result, this is a growingly important area for filling a gap in the literature. Taking that importance into the consideration this study will focus on the fashion and beauty industries (Lang & Armstrong, 2018).

Furthermore, this study focuses on the credibility dimensions of social media influencers, specifically Instagram Influencers. According to the open literature future research should look into the relative importance of the three credibility dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) the expertise and trustworthiness dimensions of source credibility have been shown to produce different patterns of results and to be of varying importance at times (AlFarraj et al., 2020). It has been said that future research might manipulate these two dimensions separately. Therefore this research focuses on three credibility dimensions separately to find their effect on consumer purchase intention. As a result, the current study is intended to fill the aforementioned gaps, and it has investigated the impact of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1: To identify the impact of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.

- 2: To identify the impact that social media influencers' attractiveness has on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.
- 3: To identify the impact that social media influencers' trustworthiness has on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.
- 4: To identify the impact that social media influencers' expertise has on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.
- 5: To examine the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention on beauty products in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media

The number of social media users is growing and this shapes marketing trends and strategies, therefore marketers started perceiving social media platforms as key channels to communicate and interact with their consumers (Bianchi et al., 2017). Social Media stresses the active engagement of consumers in the creation of all published content (Alalwan, 2018). According to DataReportal (2021) there were 7.9 million social media users in Sri Lanka at the end of January 2021. The number of social media users in Sri Lanka increased by 1.5 million between 2020 -2021. Therefore it can be clearly seen that social media usage is booming within the Sri Lankan context as well.

Social Media Influencers

In the current growing digital world, we are witnessing the extreme growth of these generations' new icons. These are the idols that are famous on social media and who are better known as social media influencers (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). According to many scholars influencers are considered "special individual" who has the ability to create important content and have a high reputation in a specific area (Cha et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2017). This reputation can result from the level of expertise of influencers in their specific field so that consumers trust them. In contrast to celebrities, influencers come into the place as ordinary personalities who're authentic and easy to approach (Chapple & Cownie 2017).

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a rapidly growing, content-oriented online based activity with the idea that the general public will tend to buy products or services recommended by these so-called influencers (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2021). Consequently, influencer marketing can be identified as a form of marketing where the brands invest in selected influencers to promote their content to both the influencers' audience and the brands' target audience (Yodel 2017). Influencer marketing is acquiring significance as it can especially reach young audiences with personal, credible and engaging content.

Instagram Influencers

Scholars have stated Instagram is the most used platform to follow brands (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). According to Influencer Marketing Hub (2021), Instagram is currently identified as the most popular social media channel for influencer marketing.

Even though there are a number of platforms to conduct influencer marketing campaigns, the newest trend is to perform influencer activities through Instagram (Enberg, 2018). With the enormous growth of sponsored posts, Instagram has become the most eminent influencer marketing channel over the years (Bailis, 2019). It can be seen that Instagram remains the platform of choice for most social media influencers. Hootsuite (2021) has stated 93% of U.S. marketers plan to use Instagram for their influencer campaigns in 2021.

Influencer Credibility

“The perceived credibility of an influencer refers to whether an individual perceives the influencers’ recommendations as unbiased, believable, true, or factual” (Lepper, 1981, pp.326). Further, it is stated that for the persuasiveness of a message, the credibility of a communicator or the message source is an important factor (Hovland & Weiss 1951)

As per Ohanian (1990) source credibility theory explains that people are more likely to convince when the source itself shows as a credible source. Source credibility consists of three key components: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Hovland et al.,1953; Ohanian, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Sternthal et al., 1978). If the consumers do not consider a message as a credible one, they become resistant to the attempts when convincing (Lee & Koo,2012) With reference to the previous studies it suggests that perceived credibility is one of the key factors when people are selecting or following influencers (Nam & D’an, 2018).

After rigorous research Ohanian (1990) came up with three constructs to measure the influencer effectiveness by looking at the perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness of the influencer, specifically in the advertisement course. For a source to be credible it should encompass three requirements: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness.

Attractiveness

Attractiveness is whether the person is good-looking or not, in other words, the physical attractiveness of the source. Patzer (1983, pp.229-241) stated that in most research, attractiveness is defined as “the degree to which a stimulus person’s facial features are pleasing to observe.” According to Ohanian (1990) briefly, the attractiveness of an influencer is considered, when Instagram users perceive them as elegant, classy, attractive, beautiful or sexy. Erdogan (1999, pp.299), stated attractiveness is the “stereotype of positive associations to a person and not only entails physical attractiveness but also other characteristics such

as personality and athletic ability". With some evidence Joseph (1982) revealed that physically attractive influencers' impact on different dependent measures, further attractive influencers and have the tendency of getting believed, liked and preferred to create a positive impact on products than the unattractive ones. Also it is said that attractive influencers usually have more influence over consumers than less attractive ones (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Joseph, 1982).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, addresses the whether the specific individual is believable or not (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020) It further elaborates whether he/she has been influenced by a third party or is this, their honest opinion. According to Ohanian (1990) even whether the influencer is an expert or not, trustworthy influencer is more persuasive. Further according to him trustworthiness is the degree of confidence that consumers will have on influencers' intent to convey the assertions they consider most valid (Ohanian, 1990).

Trustworthiness will address whether an influencer judges a brand objectively or in a bias manner just on behalf of the financial or material rewards (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Many studies that have been executed are those that support the positive impact of trustworthiness on effectiveness of influencer marketing (Chao et al., 2005).

Expertise

Expertise is presented as "authoritativeness" (McCroskey, 1966), "competence" (Whitehead, 1968), "expertness" (Applbaum & Anatol, 1972), or "qualification" (Berlo et al., 1969). In simple terms expertise is known as the source's level of knowledge and it also means the knowledge, experience and the problem solving ability in a given area. McCracken (1989) has defined expertise as "the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions;" in other words expertise means the communicator is qualified and capable of providing valid and accurate information in a specific subject area (Hovland et al., 1953).

Consumer Purchase Intention

Many previous scholars have stated that purchase intention is an individual's intention of purchasing a specific brand for him/herself after an assured evaluation (Laroche & Sadokierski, 1994; Laroche et al., 1996; Mackenzie et al., 1986). Purchase intention also refers to the likelihood that consumers plan or are willing to buy in the future Huang et al., (2011). Now consumers usually log on to social media and do a prior research in order to look for product information and feedback from influencers before making a purchase, as the consumers are now relying more on user-generated content especially on Instagram (Racherla & Friske, 2012).

Beauty Industry

Influencers are very commonly used for fashion products (Halvorsen et al., 2013); these fashion influencers have a large follower-base on social media who create content on fashion to convince consumers in their purchase decision.

According to Forbes (2018) in relation to cosmetics and beauty products, 57% of companies already work with influencers. Instagram is a great platform for the influencers for their success and popularity, because of its filters and wide audience reaching capacity. Since now that the demand in fashion industry is growing, shoppers are becoming sensitive in fashion and pretty much influenced by fashion trends when it comes to their purchase intention (Lang & Armstrong, 2018). These trends are mostly taken forward by these fashion influencers and leaders (Park & Kim, 2016). Generation Y and Z consumers will get more impacted by the influencers in the fashion industry since they tend to consider them as close ones (Pate & Adams, 2013).

Conceptual & Theoretical Framework

Social media influencers' credibility and purchase intention

According to O'Keefe (1990), source credibility is "A judgement made by a perceiver concerning the believability of a communicator" (O'Keefe, 1990). Ohanian (1990) has stated that the positive features of a communicator influencing the message receiver's acceptance are also referred to as source credibility. It has been found that purchase intention and brand attitude of consumers are dependent on the credibility of communicator influencing the message receiver's acceptance which are also referred to as source credibility.

It has been found that purchase intention and brand attitude of consumers are dependent on the credibility of endorser (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Chin et al., 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Also previous researches have demonstrated endorsers' characteristics (e.g., expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) impact positively on consumers' purchase intentions (e.g., Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Newell 2002; Lee & Koo 2015). Also it is said that, since consumers perceive the content generated by influencers as more credible than the content provided by the sellers (Jonas, 2010), their willingness purchase intention might increase (Waldt, Loggerenberg & Wehmeyer, 2009; Fan & Miao, 2012). Hence it is hypothesized that,
H1: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.

Social media influencers' attractiveness and purchase intention

On opinion agreement and liking, with no interaction, expertise and physical attractiveness dimensions of the source were found to have a significant main effect (Horai et al., 1974). According to Maddux and Rogers (1980) they found there is no main effect of physical attractiveness and no interaction with source expertise on agreement with the advocated message.

When the source was physically attractive, Mills and Aronson (1965) discovered that an overt desire to persuade (Representing low trustworthiness) increased the effectiveness of a message, possibly because an expressed desire to influence could clarify what the audience must do to ingratiate or identify with the source. When the

source was unattractive, however, there was no impact of an obviously expressed aim to influence, whereas the influencer who enjoys a high level of attractiveness is more likely to affect their followers' buy intention (Van der Walddt et al., 2009).

Also Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) found out a that there is a strong correlation to the social media influencers as they found the attractiveness as a key in changing the consumer attitudes and matching the right endorsers to the right and reliable brand. Recently, Taillon et al., (2020) found that social media influencers' attractiveness and likability positively affected attitudes toward the influencers, word-of-mouth behavior, and purchase intention. Hence it is hypothesized that,

H2: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' attractiveness on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka

Social media influencers trustworthiness and purchase intention

Scholars have identified that influencers' trustworthiness is considered when the Instagram users observe them as reliable, sound, honest, or trustworthy (Ceyhan et al., 2018;Ohanian,1990;Munnukka et al., 2016).The extent of trust and loyalty between the consumers and their influencers has been seen to positively affect the sustainability of the relationships between the followers and the influencers, the sales, and the brand (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Much literature executed supports the positive impact of trustworthiness on effectiveness (Chao et al., 2005). Further Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) found that the trustworthiness of the public figure is the issue most crucially investigated in the beauty industry. Hence it is hypothesized that,

H3: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' trustworthiness on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka

Social media influencers' expertise and purchase intention

Perceived expertise of celebrity endorsers' has significantly explained intention to purchase the products, regardless of whether the product is for own use or for a gift giving (Ohanian, 1991). However mixed results were obtained by Moore, Hausknecht, and Thamodaran (1986). It is said that expertise will not only shape the level of influencer credibility perceived but also could shape the purchasing behaviour and purchase intention (Schouten et al., 2019). Thus for the considered study, it can be hypothesized that,

H4: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' expertise on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka

Most impactful credibility dimension

All three credibility dimensions, attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness are considered to be equally important to purchase intention and affect involvement with the advertisement message. It's said as that only trustworthiness has a significant impact on attitude towards the brand and brand beliefs. When it comes to the attitude toward the advertisement, the perceived

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attractiveness of the endorser is considered more important than the expertise and trustworthiness (Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Trustworthiness and expertise dimensions of source credibility may hold different weights. It has been said that a trustworthy communicator is more influential than an untrustworthy one even if he or she is an expert or not (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). Overall, the expert and a trustworthy source reveal the most opinion change. Studies seem to show that trustworthiness is more impactful than expertise.

But in contrast, some other studies have shown that trustworthiness as a single dimension may not be enough or may be less important than the expertise dimension. Hovland and Weiss (1951) and Kelman and Hovland (1953) reveal that a source who profited from persuading the audience was judged as less fair and tended to produce less attitude change, but the opinion change differences occurred only when the disinterested source was an expert as well.

Within a sample of people aged between 18 to 24 it has been found 50% of them trust the post of the influencers they follow (Statista, 2018). Further 40% of them have more trust over the influencers over the brand promotions. This in conclusion, confirms the crucial role of trustworthiness of social media influencers (Statista, 2018). Also Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) found that the trustworthiness of the public figure is the most important issue most crucially investigated in the beauty industry. Considering the statements of most of the scholars we hypothesize that trustworthiness is the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention on fashion products. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that,

H5: Trustworthiness is the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention on beauty products in Sri Lanka

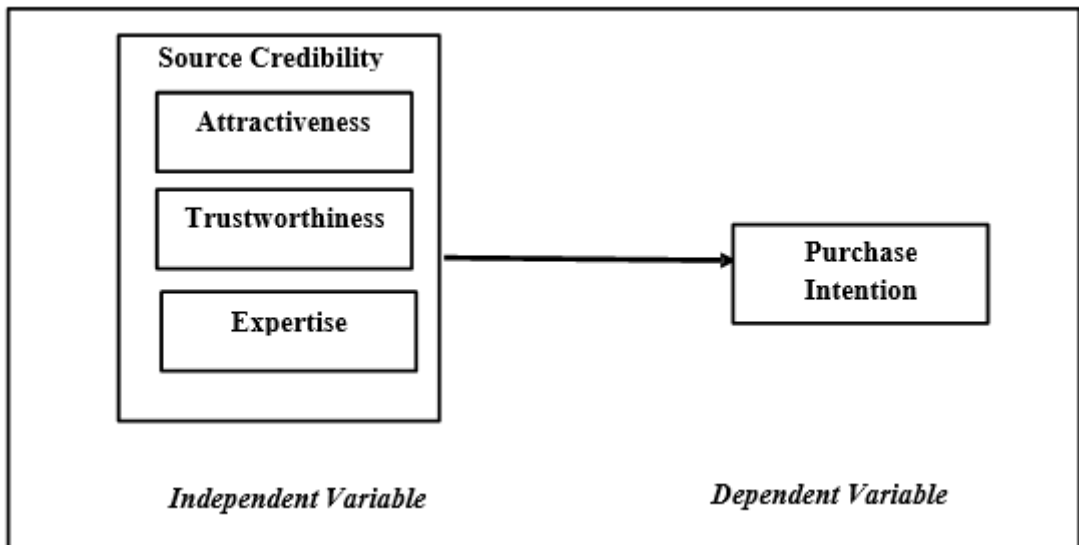


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: (Ohanion, 1991)

In the context of celebrity endorsement, source credibility model was utilized as a tri-component dimension consisting of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used positivism as the research philosophy because this study is based on research questions that are going to be tested and confirmed by relevant hypotheses. Accordingly, this study has utilized the Deductive research approach. A quantitative study will be carried out under the research strategy, using the survey method. An online questionnaire (Google Form) was circulated among the participants to collect data relevant to the study. The time horizon for the study is considered as single cross-sectional.

In order to conduct this study a quantitative approach will be employed as it is the best-suited method for conducting a study of this nature. Primary data is the main source to conduct this research, by analyzing the major perceived credibility dimensions of an influencer and their impact on purchase intention. But it is also supported by secondary data collected through quantitative research. Moreover, the study is based only on the behavior of active Instagram users in Sri Lanka, aged 18 years old or above, that follow one or more Influencers on Instagram or have some kind of knowledge of influencers.

According to DataReportal (2022) recent statistics, approximately there are 1.55Mn Instagram users in Sri Lanka. Therefore for this study the population is identified as individuals (Sri Lankans) who use Instagram as a social media platform. Since Colombo district has the highest internet usage penetration in Sri Lanka the sample will be taken from the Colombo district. In this study sampling element is Instagram users aged between 18 -34 years who are living in the Colombo district in Sri Lanka because most of the Instagram users are from 18-34 age range (NapoleanCat, 2021) (DataReportal ,2022). As per the recent statistics reports from DataReporatal (2021) approximately there are 1,550,000 Instagram users in Sri Lanka. Therefore the study will be around 1,000,000 individuals. When determining sample size, Morgan Table is used for determine sample size (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). According to Morgan Table sample size for the study will be approximately 384. But, Comrey and Lee (1992) define the efficiency of samples according to their sample size, whereas a sample size of 100 people is considered poor, 200 is fair, 300 is good, 500 is very good and lastly, 1000 is considered to be excellent. Regarding the principal component analysis, Hair et al. (2005), recommend a sample size superior to 200 participants. Considering all this, the researcher has selected an adequate convenient sample of size 150 considering the constraints and the limitations.

Goodness of Measurement

Credibility dimensions (Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, expertise) have been tested and established through literature through the time in different research in the past, initially developed by Ohanian (1990) and further confirmed by Rebelo (2017), Rachibini (2018). Therefore the researcher has decided to conduct the component matrix analysis to measure the Uni-Dimensionality. With reference to the component matrix it can be seen all the indicators well established without any negative values which means no indicator will be disqualified. Therefore all of these indicators will be carried forward for further analysis. Moreover, it can be concluded that Uni-Dimensionality is established in all the indicators.

Table 1: Component Matrix

Code	Indicators	Factor value
ATT1	I think influencer has a physical appearance that is elegant	.899
ATT2	I think the influencer has a physical appearance that is handsome / beautiful	.902
ATT3	I think the influencer has a physical appearance that is fashionable	.865
ATT4	I think the influencer has a physical appearance that is attractive	.882
ATT5	I think the influencer is very classy	.803
TRU1	I think the influencer when endorsing beauty products has a good knowledge	.884
TRU2	I think the influencer is sincere when endorsing beauty products	.852
TRU3	I think the influencer is honest when endorsing beauty products	.900
TRU4	I think the influencer can be trusted when endorsing beauty products	.860
TRU5	I think the influencer become the main reference when endorsing beauty products	.724
EXP1	I think the influencer has experience beauty products	.839
EXP2	I think the influencer has a good knowledge on beauty products	.919
EXP3	I think the influencer has qualifications/certifications on beauty industry/products	.858
EXP4	I think the influencer has a skill in applying beauty Products	.874
EXP5	I think the influencer has an expertise on beauty products when endorsing beauty products	.901
PI1	I want to know about the beauty product after viewing content uploaded by influencer.	.770
PI2	I am interested to try the beauty product after viewing content uploaded by the influencer	.886
PI3	I consider to buy the beauty product after viewing content uploaded influencer.	.916
PI4	I will have to have the beauty product after viewing content uploaded by influencer.	.862
PI5	I get motivated to purchase after Influencer appearance in the advertisement on the beauty products	.877

Source: Ohanion (1990) & further confirmed by Rebelo (2017), Rachibini (2018)

Table 2: Validity and Reliability Tests

Variable	Validity Test			Reliability Test		
	KMO	BTS	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha Values	No of items
	0.5<	0.05>	0.7<	0.5<	0.7<	
Attractiveness	0.883	0.000	0.986	0.709	0.917	5
Trustworthiness	0.863	0.000	0.985	0.878	0.898	5
Expertise	0.863	0.000	0.988	0.844	0.925	5
Purchase Intention	0.885	0.000	0.979	0.746	0.914	5

Source: Survey Results

According to Table 2 squared correlations of each variable were lower than AVE values of the relevant variable. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the variables satisfied with discriminant validity and the study has been established with discriminant validity.

Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the reliability, and according to Table 02, the Cronbach's alpha of all variables is greater than 0.7, indicating that the reliability has been established in the study. Content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity are the three categories of validity.. As shown in Table 02, all of the variables studied have KMO values greater than 0.5, AVE values greater than 0.5, and CR values greater than 0.7. All of the variables have significance values less than 0.05. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the study's Convergent Validity is established.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Analysis

	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Purchase Intention
Attractiveness	0.709			
Trustworthiness	0.202	0.878		
Expertise	0.215	0.694	0.844	
Purchase Intention	0.167	0.393	0.358	0.746

Source: Survey Results

According to Table 3 all squared correlations of each variable were lower than AVE values of the relevant variable. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the variables satisfied with discriminant validity and the study has been established with discriminant validity.

FINDINGS

Data Preparation

For the current study, the researcher used the data preparation process, which comprises checking, editing, coding, transformation, data cleaning, systematic data adjustment, and finally the selection of a data analysis approach (Malhotra & Dash, 2010).

According to Malhotra et al., (2017) questionnaires with incomplete responses, responses that show little variance and questionnaires answered by unqualified participants should not be taken into further analysis. Therefore for the final analysis the researcher took 145 respondents out of 150 respondents. It has been found that there are no missing values of the data set and all 145 responses have been accurately entered into the data set and could be used for further analysis. Further, it is important that the data meet the basic assumptions underlying the statistical techniques to be used before proceeding with the data analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Hence, the most fundamental assumption in multivariate analysis, normality was tested.

Table 4: Normality Test

Variable	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std.error	Statistic	Std.error
Attractiveness	145	-1.417	0.201	3.406	0.400
Trustworthiness	145	-0.233	0.201	-0.456	0.400
Expertise	145	-0.270	0.201	-0.345	0.400
Purchase intention	145				

Source: Survey Results

According to Table 4 Skewness and Kurtosis values range from -2 to +2 and the recommended value range of Skewness and Kurtosis for normal distribution of data is +2 to -2 (Hair et al., 2014). As depicted in the Table 4.10, only Skewness values are between of -2 to +2. However, only Attractiveness variable Kurtosis value is not between the recommended value ranges. But considering the majority it can be concluded that data is normally distributed and qualified for the further studies for the research.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	P Value
Attractiveness	Purchase Intention	0.409	0.000
Trustworthiness	Purchase Intention	0.627	0.000
Expertise	Purchase Intention	0.598	0.000

Source: Survey Results

According to Table 5 it indicates that there is a positive linear relationship between dependent variable and independent variable dimensions attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise. When comparing all three dimensions the correlation between trustworthiness and purchase intention is high.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Demographic analysis

The researcher conducted a demographic analysis (gender, age, education level, work situation and monthly income) to identify the general characteristics of Instagram users in the Colombo district in Sri Lanka who participated in the survey:-

According to the demographic data analysis, the majority of respondents (92 in total) are females, with 53 are male respondents. Percentage-wise there are 63.01% females and 36.99% of males.

Most of the respondents are 25 years old. (40.41%) Minority of the respondents are 35 years old. (0.68%). This representation can be divided into two groups. 18-25 years Represent Gen Z, 26-35 years - Represent Millennials According to the survey data most of the respondents fall under the category of Gen Z.

According to the analysis majority of the respondents are undergraduates which is 54.1% and it was followed by graduates which is 30.8% and postgraduates which is 14.4% respectively. Most of the respondents are full time workers which amounts 63.7% and 16.4% of respondents are working students. Most of the respondents, as a percentage 51.69% have Rs.25, 000, or below income level.

Awareness on Instagram influencers

It has been found that all the respondents who use Instagram as a social media platform, are aware on Instagram Influencers. 100% of the respondents have responded positively on the awareness on Instagram Influencers. However only 64.8% respondents in the sample follow a beauty influencer on Instagram, while 35.2% of the respondents do not follow a beauty Influencer on Instagram.

Hypothesis testing

Social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka

In order to test the impact of Social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention simple linear regression analysis has been conducted. According to Table 6, R2 value is 0.417 and it indicates approximately 41.7% of the dependent variable which is purchase intention of beauty products is explained by the Influencer Credibility. Therefore, it can be concluded that there can be other variables that would explain the dependent variable.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.646 ^a	.417	.413	.69822

a. Predictors: (Constant), Credibility

Source: Survey Data

The Analysis of Variance is a statistical analysis that tests the degree of differences between two or more groups of an experiment and by that it indicates whether the model is significant (Sekaran, 2016). According to Table 7 the significance level is less than 0.05 (sig. value = 0.000) at 102.418 of F statistic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model is significant

Table 7: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.929	1	49.929	102.418	.000 ^b
	Residual	69.713	143	.488		
	Total	119.642	144			

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), CR

Source: Survey Data

According to Table 8, the significance value of Influencer Credibility is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and the B value of Influencer Credibility is 0.758 which is a positive value. Therefore, it can be concluded that influencer Credibility has a significant positive impact on purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. Hence, hypothesis one (H1: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka) has been confirmed by the study.

Table 8: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.670	.263		2.546	.012
	CR	.758	.075	.646	10.120	.000

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a. Dependent Variable: PI
Source: Survey Data

Impact of influencer attractiveness towards purchase intention of beauty products

The second sub objective of the study is to identify whether there is an impact influencer attractiveness on purchase intention of beauty products.

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.409 ^a	.167		.161

a. Predictors: (Constant), ATT
Source: Survey Data

Table 9 shows, R2 value as 0.167 and it indicates approximately 16.7% of the dependent variable which is purchase intention towards beauty products is explained by the independent variable influencer attractiveness.

Table 10: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	19.997	1	19.997	28.697	.000 ^b
Residual	99.646	143	.697		
Total	119.642	144			

a. Dependent Variable: PI
b. Predictors: (Constant), ATT
Source: Survey Data

Table 10 shows, the significance level is less than 0.05 (sig. value = 0.000) at 28.697 of F statistic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model is significant.

Table 11: Coefficients^a

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B		Beta		
1	(Constant) 1.351	.365		3.701	.000

ATT	.479	.089	.409	5.357	.000
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a. Dependent Variable: PI

Source: Survey Data

Table 11 shows, the significance value of influencer attractiveness 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and the B value of influencer attractiveness is 0.479 which is a positive value. Therefore, it can be concluded that Influencer Attractiveness has a significant positive impact on purchase intention of beauty products. Hence, hypothesis two (H2: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' attractiveness on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka) has been confirmed by the study.

Impact of influencer trustworthiness towards purchase intention of beauty products

The third sub objective of the study is to identify whether there is an impact influencer trustworthiness on Purchase Intention of beauty products.

Table 12: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.627a	.393	.389	.71254

a. Predictors: (Constant), TRU

Source: Survey Data

With reference to Table 12, R2 value is 0.3 and it indicates approximately 39.3% of the dependent variable which is purchase intention towards beauty products is explained by the dimension Influencer trustworthiness

Table 13: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.039	1	47.039	92.649	.000 ^b
	Residual	72.603	143	.508		
	Total	119.642	144			

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), TRU

Source: Survey Data

With reference to Table 13, the significance level is less than 0.05 (sig. value = 0.000) at 92.649 of F statistic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model is significant.

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Table 14: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.401	.203		6.900	.000
	TRU	.597	.062	.627	9.625	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PI

Source: Survey Data

With reference to Table 14, the significance value of influencer attractiveness 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and the B value of influencer attractiveness is 0.597 which is a positive value. Therefore, it can be concluded that influencer trustworthiness has a significant positive impact on purchase intention of beauty products Hence, hypothesis three (H3: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' trustworthiness on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka) has been confirmed by the study.

Impact of influencer expertise towards purchase intention of beauty products

The fourth sub objective of the study is to identify whether there is an impact influencer expertise on Purchase Intention of beauty products.

Table 15: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.598a	.357	.353	.73342

a. Predictors: (Constant), EXP

Source: Survey data

According to Table 15, R2 value is 0.357 and it indicates approximately 35.7% of the dependent variable which is the purchase intention of beauty products is explained by the Influencer Expertise.

Table 16: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.721	1	42.721	79.421	.000 ^b
	Residual	76.921	143	.538		

Total 119.642 144

- a. Dependent Variable: PI
b. Predictors: (Constant), EXP

Source: Survey Data

According to Table 16, the significance level is less than 0.05 (sig. value = 0.000) at 79.421 of F statistic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model is significant

Table 17: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.523	.205		7.420	.000
	EXP	.554	.062	.598	8.912	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: PI

Source: Survey Data

According to Table 17, the significance value of influencer expertise 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and the B value of influencer attractiveness is 0.554 which is a positive value. Therefore, it can be concluded that influencer expertise has a significant positive impact on purchase intention of beauty products. Hence, hypothesis four (H4: There is a positive impact of social media influencers' expertise on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka) has been confirmed by the study.

Most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention of beauty products

The fifth sub objective of the study is to identify the most impactful credibility purchase intention of beauty products. To find the salient factor affecting dependent variable a multiple linear regression should be conducted.

Table 18: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.653a	.426	.414	.69783

- a. Predictors: (Constant), ATT, TRU, EXP

Source: Survey Data

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Table 18 reflects, adjusted R2 value is 0.414 and it indicates approximately 41.4% of the dependent variable which is purchase intention on beauty products is explained by all the dimensions namely attractiveness, trustworthiness and the expertise. Since R2 value is less than 50%, it can be concluded that there can be other variables rather than considering variables of the study that would explain the dependent variable which is, purchase intention towards beauty products in Sri Lanka.

Table 19: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	50.980	3	16.993	34.896	.000 ^B
	Residual	68.663	141	.487		
	Total	119.642	144			

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), ATT, TRU, EXP

Source: Survey Data

Table 19 reflects, the significance level is less than 0.05 (sig. value = 0.000) at 34.896 of F statistic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model is significant, and a model can be built to identify the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka.

Table 20: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B		Beta		
1	(Constant)	.852	.312		2.735	.007
	EXP	.191	.109	.206	1.758	.081
	TRU	.376	.111	.394	3.396	.001
	ATT	.160	.085	.136	1.878	.062

Dependent Variable: PI

Source: Survey Data

Table 20 reflects, only the significance value of influencer attractiveness is less than 0.05 (significance value is 0.000) which can be considered as the only variable that has a significant impact towards the dependent variable purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. Influencer attractiveness and expertise is higher than 0.05

which means it does not have a significant impact towards the dependent variable purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka is influencer trustworthiness.

According to the hypothesis five it has been hypothesized that trustworthiness is the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. This is aligned with the previous research literature and findings. Therefore it can be concluded that hypothesis five is confirmed by the study (H5: Trustworthiness is the most impactful credibility factor towards purchase intention on beauty products).

DISCUSSIONS

According to the findings, there is a positive impact of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. As studied previously (Sertoglu, Catli & Korkmaz, 2014) and by Rebelo (2018) recently, this research also proves that the relationship between Instagram users' perceived credibility of an influencer and their purchase intention is verified and positive, which predicts that higher levels of credibility develop higher levels of purchase intention. It was found that, generally, sources with higher credibility and their feedback were evaluated more favorably. Further, it has been emphasized that higher source credibility results in more persuasion in terms of both attitude and behavioral changes (Pornpitakpan, 2004). In alignment with this it has been revealed that a highly credible source usually led to more behavioral compliance than did a low-credibility one (Crisci & Kassinove, 1973; Levine, Moss, Ramsey, & Fleishman, 1978; Tybout, 1978). Since purchase intention can be recognized as an attitude and behavioral element that will further support the results of this research is true and accurate regarding the positive relationship between the influencer credibility and the purchase intention.

This study's findings revealed that influencer attractiveness has a positive impact on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. With reference to a study conducted in Jordan, it has been found that Jordanian customers are more likely to consider influencers with the physical attraction and experience of enjoyment of the dermatology products as a credible source of information once they are in the process of formulating their decision to buy such products (Tarhini et al., 2019; Ohanian, 1990; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Similarly in the Sri Lankan beauty industry context, the researcher was able to find out that there's a positive impact between influencer attractiveness and the purchase intention. Further Lim et al. (2017) concluded that the credibility of social media influencers was measured by their attractiveness, meaning transfer and product match-up can improve the purchase intention. The same scholar analyzed the impact of social media influencers' effectiveness mainly for their attractiveness on purchase intention and found a positive effect.

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As per the findings, there is a positive impact of social media influencers' trustworthiness on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. It has been proved that trustworthiness showed significant effects on the influencer's credibility and consumers' purchase intention (Saima & Khan, 2020) The main findings of previous studies have conveyed that likability, trustworthiness and familiarity have a greater influence on purchase intention towards fashion products. This is perfectly aligned with the current research findings.

Results in previous scholarly articles show that social media managers seeking to implement an influencer campaign should primarily pay attention to influencers' trustworthiness, for success from the perspective of social influencers. (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020) Virkkunen and Norhio (2019) as well as Abert et al. (2019) have thus demonstrated that influencers have well recognized the importance of trustworthiness.

Also the high importance of trustworthiness may actually be good news for social media managers. As selflessness is a major driver of trustworthiness (Walster et al., 1966), social media managers should select influencers who act in a selfless way. Suitable influencers should endorse a product because they are sincerely convinced of its worth and not (merely) because they will be paid.

This result means that the best influencers may be those to whom the contracting brand must pay the least money, which represents considerable savings potential. Today, influencer campaigns without financial remuneration are realistic (Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018).

According to the findings, there is a positive impact of social media influencers' expertise on the purchase intention of beauty products in Sri Lanka. The study of Hughes et al. (2019) investigated the purchase intention and credibility in the UK context, and the results showcased that for any sponsored post posted on the blog, the blogger with better expertise would be the more effective one to raise the awareness versus others, and this is demonstrated in the increase in purchasing rates.

When comparing a source high in expertise, to one low in expertise, it appears to lead to positive attitudes toward the endorser and the advertisement (Braunsberger, 1996). Celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise has significantly explained subjects' intention to purchase these products, regardless of whether the product is for personal use or for gift-giving (Ohanian, 1991). On the commercial believability rating, commercials associated with the highly credible source were rated as more believable and truthful than those associated with the low credibility source.

As investigated from the fifth hypothesis in the analysis part of the study, the most impactful credibility dimension towards purchase intention is influencer trustworthiness. This result is supported by Akar and Nasir (2015). They have found that trustworthiness is the main dimension of credibility that explains purchase intention. Also, this can be further explained by the finding of McGinnies and Ward (1980) that a trustworthy communicator is more persuasive regardless of whether he or she is an expert. Further, when it comes to cosmetics purchase intention, the

attractiveness but more importantly the trustworthiness and expertise of the beauty blogger strongly affect the most.

In contrast to the results of this study, the (general) findings of McGuire (1985) indicated that expertise was the most important dimension of source credibility in a general sense. Only trustworthiness had a significant impact on attitude toward the brand and brand beliefs. Nevertheless, other studies have tended to show that trustworthiness alone may not be enough or may be less important than expertise. For example, Hovland and Weiss (1951) and Kelman and Hovland (1953) found that a source who profited from persuading the audience was judged as less fair and tended to produce less attitude change, but the opinion change differences occurred only when the disinterested source was an expert as well.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Research studies carried out to study social media influencers' credibility are rare and cannot be seen frequently in literature. It has been stated in the literature below. Aspects and features related to influencers' credibility dimensions (i.e. attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise) have not yet been well covered and give opportunities for more research and investigation. Also, previous studies on source credibility have investigated endorsers' influence on consumers but not on social media influencers (e.g., Cunningham and Bright 2012; Dwivedi, Johnson, and McDonald 2015; Guido and Peluso 2009; Lee and Koo 2015)

When we consider especially the fashion and beauty industry it's said that there is a lack of literature tackling the relationships between fashion leadership and consumers' purchase intention (Lang and Armstrong, 2018). Therefore, the present study contributes to the literature as research conducted on social media influencers' credibility on purchase intention with special reference to the beauty industry.

Further, studies on influencer credibility have been conducted with regard to a limited set of countries in European and Asian countries which are also developed countries (Silva et al., 2018; Verhoef et al., 2015). But when looking at the South Asian context, especially in developing countries, researches on this topic are very limited. When considering the Sri Lankan context as an influencer marketing approach is a novel concept, research studies are extremely rare in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the present study would add its findings to the literature in the Sri Lankan context and further in the South Asian context. This research provides valuable insights, especially to digital marketers who're trying to provide better digital marketing solutions for different brands. Because of the growing popularity of influencer marketing brands are more interested in investing on influencer marketing. Even though digital marketers currently use influencer marketing as a mode of advertising and promotions, through this research findings they can select the most appropriate influencer for beauty product campaigns.

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Moreover, identifying how influencers' perceived credibility is perceived by consumers and its impact on purchase intention is of immense relevance and significance for marketers to build their strategies over the Instagram platform. Since the research findings are that the most impactful credibility factor is influencer trustworthiness, it's important to choose a trustworthy source for the influencer marketing campaign to get the maximum benefit out of it. From the viewpoint of influencers, for them to be successful influencers there are some important facts to be noted. With the survey results it's found that trustworthiness is the most impactful credibility factor. Therefore to appear more trustworthy, influencers should always communicate through two-sided messages [consisting of both positives and negatives (Kamins et al., 1989)].

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As of the limitation, a sample of the study is limited to a specific geographic location which is the Colombo district in Sri Lanka, it is suggested that future researchers get a sample covering other districts of Sri Lanka to represent the entire Sri Lankan population and more importantly to increase the sample size of the study. Further, this research findings are limited to Sri Lanka, which has a different culture, beliefs and values. Therefore this study can be conducted taking several countries with different cultural backgrounds. One of the most important factors of research is variables of the study. The present study has considered only one independent variable with three dimensions that impacts purchase intention. But there could be other variables such as likability, familiarity, similarity and. etc Therefore, it is suggested to extend the study using more variables.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to express their gratitude to the staff of the Department of Agribusiness Management of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka and to the respondents who have taken part in the survey by spending their valuable time to provide the necessary information.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declared no competing interests.

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