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Influencer Marketing In The Skincare Industry: Dual Empirical Perspectives On Credibility And Technology Acceptance

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Abstract
Purpose: *The rapid expansion of social media has revolutionized how brands interact with consumers, especially in image-sensitive sectors such as skincare. In this dynamic digital landscape, social media influencers (SMIs) function as brand intermediaries, humanizing marketing messages through authentic storytelling and perceived expertise. The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the impact of influencer credibility and attractiveness on consumer purchase intentions in the skincare industry.*
Theoretical Framework: *Grounded in the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) and the Source Attractiveness Theory (Ohanian, 1990), the study conceptualizes influencer credibility in terms of expertise, trustworthiness, and honesty, while attractiveness encompasses physical appeal and likeability. These theories collectively explain how informational value and aesthetic appeal contribute to persuasion and consumer behaviour.*
Methodology: *A quantitative research design was employed using primary data collected from 500 respondents. A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was conducted to test the predictive influence of influencer credibility and attractiveness on consumer purchase intentions toward skincare products.*
Findings: *The results reveal that influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.582$, $p < 0.001$) has a significantly stronger impact on purchase intention than attractiveness ($\beta = 0.215$, $p = 0.004$). While attractiveness helps capture consumer attention and initial engagement, credibility drives deeper cognitive persuasion and purchase behaviour. This indicates that consumers value expertise and authenticity more than visual appeal in the context of skincare marketing.*
Implications: *The findings underscore the strategic importance of authentic, knowledge-based influencer communication in building consumer trust and loyalty. Brands should therefore prioritize collaborations with influencers who exhibit domain expertise, transparency, and reliability, ensuring that marketing messages align with consumer expectations for honesty and credibility.*
Keywords: *Social media influencers, credibility, attractiveness, purchase intention, skincare industry, Source Credibility Theory*

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I. Introduction

Social media platforms have transformed from networking hubs into influential consumer ecosystems, where purchase decisions are shaped not only by advertisements but also by peer-like endorsements (Freberg et al., 2011). In this context, social media influencers (SMIs) play an instrumental role in bridging the psychological gap between brands and consumers through relatable narratives and perceived expertise.

The skincare industry, characterized by high involvement and perceived product risk, relies heavily on trust and perceived product efficacy. Consumers are increasingly skeptical of traditional advertising and instead rely on influencer-generated content for authentic product recommendations (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This trend underscores the relevance of the Source Credibility Theory, which posits that the persuasiveness of a communicator depends on their expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990).

Previous studies (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017) reveal that attractiveness enhances parasocial interaction and identification, particularly in lifestyle categories. However, in functional product categories such as skincare, credibility often supersedes attractiveness, as consumers prioritize factual accuracy, transparency, and genuine product knowledge over physical appeal. Hence, this study aims to empirically test and compare these two dimensions—credibility and attractiveness—in determining purchase intention in the skincare market.

Theoretical Framework

Theory	Core Constructs	Application to Study
Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951)	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Reliability	Explains how influencer credibility drives consumer trust and purchase decisions
Source Attractiveness Model (Ohanian, 1990)	Physical Beauty, Likeability, Familiarity	Explains how influencer attractiveness affects engagement and emotional identification
Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)	Central vs. Peripheral Processing	Suggests credibility prompts rational (central) processing, while attractiveness prompts emotional (peripheral) persuasion

Objectives of the Study

The present study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of social media influencer credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, and honesty) on consumer purchase intention toward skincare products.
2. To evaluate the impact of social media influencer attractiveness (physical appeal, likeability, and familiarity) on consumer purchase intention.
3. To compare the relative strength of credibility and attractiveness in predicting consumer behavioural responses within influencer-driven skincare marketing.

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the literature and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Social media influencer credibility has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase intention for skincare products.

H2: Social media influencer attractiveness has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase intention for skincare products.

II. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research design with structured questionnaires administered to 500 respondents in Haryana, India, through purposive sampling. The demographic profile included both genders, primarily aged 26–50 years, representing active social media users and skincare consumers.

The constructs—credibility, attractiveness, and purchase intention—were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Reliability tests showed Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.70, confirming internal consistency.

The data were analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression in SPSS. The model assessed the predictive power of influencer credibility and attractiveness on purchase intention.

III. Results

Regression Analysis: Influence of SMI Credibility and Attractiveness on Purchase Intention

Predictor Variable	Hypothesis	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Credibility (Expertise, Trustworthiness)	H1	0.582	8.754	< 0.001	Accepted
Attractiveness (Physical Appeal, Likeability)	H2	0.215	3.331	0.004	Accepted

$R^2 = 0.56$, $F(2,497) = 42.15$, $p < 0.05$

Both hypotheses (H1 and H2) were statistically supported. However, the standardized beta coefficients indicate that credibility ($\beta = 0.582$) has a substantially stronger impact on purchase intention compared to attractiveness ($\beta = 0.215$). This demonstrates that influencer trustworthiness and expertise are more influential than visual appeal in shaping consumer decisions.

IV. Discussion

The regression results demonstrate that credibility exerts the most substantial influence on purchase intention, confirming that consumers rely on influencers who are trustworthy, knowledgeable, and authentic. These findings are consistent with Source Credibility Theory, which emphasizes that message acceptance increases when the communicator is perceived as reliable and competent (Ohanian, 1990).

While attractiveness positively impacts engagement, its influence is comparatively weaker, implying that visual appeal alone cannot sustain consumer trust. Instead, consumers engage in cognitive elaboration—analyzing the usefulness and validity of influencer claims—when making purchase decisions for high-involvement products like skincare (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The results align with prior empirical evidence. Lou and Yuan (2019) observed that credibility fosters message trust and perceived authenticity, while Lim et al. (2017) found that the combination of credibility and informative content maximizes purchase intention. This study therefore reinforces that expertise and transparency are critical dimensions in influencer marketing effectiveness.

Implications

1. **For Marketers:** Brands should prioritize collaborations with influencers possessing domain expertise and an established reputation for honesty. Influencers should be encouraged to provide evidence-based product insights and transparent reviews rather than aesthetic appeal alone.
2. **For Influencers:** Building long-term audience trust requires consistent communication of authentic experiences and educational content.
3. **For Researchers:** Future studies can incorporate mediating variables such as consumer trust or attitude to refine the model and explore cross-cultural effects.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that influencer credibility outweighs attractiveness in determining consumer purchase intention for skincare products. Consumers prioritize expertise and trust over mere visual appeal, especially in contexts where product performance has direct personal implications.

As digital consumers become more discerning, authenticity and informed communication will continue to shape influencer marketing's strategic evolution. The findings provide actionable insights for brands aiming to build long-term consumer relationships grounded in trust and transparency.

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