

Beyond Trends: Promoting Sustainability through Influencer-Driven Product Endorsements

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Abstract. *In the past years, the blend of influencer marketing and sustainability has become known as a pivotal focus within the cosmetics sector. With consumer trends evolving rapidly and environmental consciousness on the rise, comprehending how influencer-driven marketing influences sustainable consumer behaviour is crucial. This study searches into the essential relationship between influencer marketing and sustainability, aiming to present the underlying mechanisms steering consumer actions and to discover strategies for promoting sustainability through influencer marketing efforts. Researching the dynamic field of influencer endorsement, the study is putting the accent on its impact on consumer perceptions and buying behaviours, particularly taking sustainability into consideration. Going through an extensive literature review and data analysis, the research presents crucial factors shaping consumer behaviour and assesses influencers' role in the buying process of sustainable cosmetic products. Using quantitative research via a questionnaire survey, the study aims to find out consumer preferences, buying habits, and the influencer's impact on sustainability marketing channels. Results put accent on a notable connection between influencer implication and sustainable cosmetics purchases, indicating the significance of genuine content and social platforms as influential channels. The study reaches a peak with insights into the challenges and prospects for the cosmetics sector in integrating sustainability into marketing strategies and finding ways to change normal consumers into environmentally conscious consumers.*

Keywords: marketing, influencer, cosmetics, social media, online.

Introduction

Lately, the combining process of influencer marketing and sustainability has gained significant attention, especially when talking about the vibrant cosmetic industry scene. (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Chen & Wang, 2017). At the same time, a growing concern among consumers regarding environmental and social issues has elevated sustainability to the forefront (Green & Jones, 2019). This convergence presents both challenges and opportunities for cosmetic companies seeking to align their marketing efforts with evolving consumer values (Kim & Lee, 2018).

Our paper puts accent mostly on the link between influencer-driven product endorsements and sustainability in the cosmetics industry. The mission is considered to be the web untangling of interactions between the presented elements, uncovering the driving forces behind consumer behaviour and prospering strategies to promote sustainability through influencer marketing efforts. By combining a piece of literature and conducting hands-on analysis, the aim is to offer insights that not only make academic discussions richer but also provide practical guidance for insiders stepping into the industry. (Johnson & Brown, 2016). Through this exploration, we aim to prepare an important understanding of the evolving image of influencer marketing and sustainability within the cosmetic industry.

Literature review

General context of marketing influence and sustainability in the cosmetic industry

The cosmetic industry embodies a distinctive fusion of marketing impact and sustainability, where consumer preferences and industry practices are continually evolving. Lately, digital platforms and social media has changed the way cosmetic products are marketed and consumed along with influencers playing a central role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviors (Gupta & Kim, 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Simultaneously, concerns surrounding sustainability have become increasingly prominent, driving shifts in consumer preferences towards eco-friendly and ethically sourced products (Lee & Chang, 2019; Park & Lee, 2018).

Influencer marketing is a new marketing strategy used by companies to promote their services and good by partnering with people who have a pretty good social media profile with lots of followers. Influencers leverage their influence and credibility among their followers to endorse or promote a brand's products or services (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Gupta & Kim, 2021; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

From the perspective of marketing, influencers offer a fresh authenticity that traditional ads often lack. Their collaborations with businesses can penetrate into diverse audiences and deliver content that truly resonates with their followers' values and interests. By measuring the impact and effectiveness of these campaigns made by influencers can be quite the puzzle, asking meticulous metrics to create returns on investment and overall success.

Relevance and purpose of the research paper

Amidst the ever-shifting terrain of the cosmetics industry, where digital platforms reign supreme and consumers increasingly prioritize sustainability, investigating the fusion of influencer marketing and sustainability is a pressing endeavour. The paper settled two main goals to achieve. Firstly, the aim was to unravel the intricate link between influencer-backed product marketing and sustainability efforts within the cosmetics industry. By analyzing existing research and some live data, it is hoped to discover the driving forces behind consumer choices in this sector and pinpoint the critical elements creating a personalized success of influencer-led sustainability initiatives.

Secondly, the research tries to offer practical insights and relevant advice for industry players going through this complex marketing field. By inspecting current practices and proposing new and personalized strategies, the aim is to steer the cosmetics industry through more sustainable and socially responsible marketing practices.

Definition of key concepts: influencer marketing and sustainability in the cosmetic industry

In recent years, the cosmetics arena has undergone a seismic shift fueled by digital innovation and a burgeoning sustainability movement. In consequence, influencer marketing and sustainability have become crucial rocks within the industry, reshaping marketing plans and consumer interactions with cosmetic products on the market.

Influencer marketing, defined as the strategic collaboration between brands and individuals with large social media followings, has emerged as a powerful tool for reaching and engaging consumers in the digital age (Williams & Page, 2021). Influencers leverage their authentic voice and online presence to endorse products, creating a direct and relatable connection with their audience and driving purchasing decisions (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Simultaneously, sustainability has emerged as a defining principle for consumers and companies alike, reflecting a growing awareness of environmental and social issues (Nikolaidou & Jolibert, 2018). In the cosmetic realm, sustainability covers a broad spectrum of initiatives, spanning from responsibly sourced ingredients to eco-conscious packaging and cruelty-free manufacturing methods (Cherian & Jacob, 2019). Consumers are increasingly seeking out brands that align with their values and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, driving demand for products that are both effective and environmentally responsible (Kozinets & Handleman, 2020).

The role of influencers in the promotion of cosmetics and recent trends

In the cosmetic arena, influencers have become crucial players, having a considerable impact over what consumers buy. With their captivating content and dedicated followers, influencers offer a genuine and relatable platform for showcasing cosmetic products, bridging the gap between brands and buyers (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Lately, influencer marketing in the cosmetics realm has pivoted towards authenticity, diversity, and inclusivity. Consumers are increasingly drawn to influencers who embrace their imperfections and advocate for body positivity and self-acceptance (Brown & Williams, 2020). Moreover, there has been a notable shift towards micro-influencers, who may have smaller followings but often boast higher engagement rates and greater authenticity (Garcia & Martinez, 2019). Customers' increasing demand for real relationships with influencers who align with their values and views is reflected in this trend.

Examples of influencers who have successfully promoted cosmetics include:
Huda Kattan (@hudabeauty): With over 50 million followers on Instagram, Huda Kattan is a beauty mogul known for her eponymous makeup brand, Huda Beauty
James Charles (@jamescharles): As one of the first male CoverGirl ambassadors, James Charles has broken barriers in the beauty industry. With his creative and original makeup looks, he has inspired millions of people to express themselves through cosmetic products.
NikkieTutorials (@nikkietutorials): Dutch makeup artist and YouTuber Nikkie de Jager, popularly known as NikkieTutorials, is well-known for her elaborate makeup transformations. She has gained recognition in the beauty industry for her frank product reviews and lively demeanor.

The impact of sustainability on consumer behavior

Sustainability has emerged as a defining factor shaping consumer behavior in various industries. Sustainability has an impact on consumer behavior that can't be denied, especially in industries like cosmetics. With a rising consciousness about the environment and ethics, consumers are reassessing their buying choices, favoring products and brands that reflect their values (Lee & Smith, 2018). This change in consumer mindset holds important implications for the cosmetics

field, where sustainability has become a crucial distinguishing factor amid intensifying market competition.

Recent research presents the many ways in which sustainability shapes consumer perception and behaviour in cosmetics. Notably, transparency and authenticity weigh heavily in consumer decisions, with brands showcasing a steadfast commitment to sustainability enjoying heightened trust and loyalty (Nguyen & Pham, 2020).

A prime example of a brand seamlessly integrating sustainability into its marketing playbook is The Body Shop. The Body Shop, which is well-known for emphasizing natural ingredients and community trade programs, has established a loyal following among socially conscious shoppers looking for ethical substitutes in the cosmetics market. People who are passionate about choosing ethical beauty products are passionately drawn to the company because of its initiatives that promote animal welfare and environmental preservation.

Integration of sustainability into Cosmetic Companies' Marketing Strategies:

A key aspect of this integration is the adoption of cruelty-free practices and the commitment to refrain from animal testing, in accordance with evolving industry standards and consumer expectations (Jung & Lee, 2021).

Prominent cosmetic brands have aligned their marketing strategies with ethical values and accepted sustainability as a core value. Companies such as L'Oréal and Estée Lauder, for instance, have put in place extensive policies against animal research and have aggressively informed customers about these efforts using a variety of marketing channels (Choi & Kim, 2020). By adopting cruelty-free policies, these companies distinguish themselves and connect with ethically conscious consumers who value social responsibility in their purchases. Cosmetic firms are jumping into the digital sphere headfirst, using digital platforms and social media to promote sustainability initiatives and start discussions about ethical sourcing and environmental preservation. By fostering transparent and authentic communication, these brands can build trust and loyalty among consumers who value sustainability and ethical practices (Yoon & Park, 2019).

Methodology

The analysis focuses into the four main criteria that customers consider when evaluating cosmetic products: price, packaging, sustainability, and ingredients. These factors, which combine financial concerns, environmental awareness, and personal beliefs, serve as the cornerstone of consumer decision-making.

Beyond statistics, the study explores the motivations behind customer decisions in the cosmetics market. It seeks to find important insights, offering industry participants navigating this constantly shifting terrain practical counsel and strategic direction. For research methodology, a quantitative approach was chosen, employing a positivist investigation method based on an online survey with 309 participants and 299 qualified for the study. Data collection took place via Google Forms, and respondents provided voluntary participation after giving their consent, with assurances of confidentiality.

The survey was distributed between February 10th and February 15th 2024, through LinkedIn, professional WhatsApp groups, and email. Data analysis was made using SPSS.

Primary Objective: Investigate the relationship between online content creators' influence and the purchase of sustainable cosmetic products among urban consumers.

Secondary Objectives:

Identify preferences and buying behavior:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive correlation between the influence of content creators in cosmetic product purchases (question 12) and the perception that they provide real and qualitative information about cosmetic products (question 13).

Evaluate the level of awareness and importance attributed to sustainability in cosmetic purchases:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive correlation between the level of familiarity with the term "sustainability" (question 6) and the degree to which consumers purchase sustainable cosmetic products (question 7).

Analyze the influence of socio-economic factors on purchase decisions:

Hypothesis 3 dives into how socio-economic factors influence buying decisions, specifically looking at the link between monthly income and preferences for sustainable cosmetics. The Pearson coefficient fetched for Hypothesis 3 stood at 0.22, indicating a feeble correlation between monthly income and sustainable product preferences. This weak correlation calls into question the premise, which linked income to a preference for sustainable products.

Explore preferred information channels and their impact on buying behavior:

Hypothesis 4 explores preferred information sources and how they influence consumer behavior, examining the relationship between relying largely on social media for information and the influence of online content creators on cosmetic purchases.

The first hypothesis looks at the relationship between the belief that content providers offer authentic, high-quality information about cosmetic products and their effect over sales of cosmetic products. The Pearson coefficient calculated between questions 12 and 13 equals a value of 0.56, indicating a moderate positive correlation. Therefore, the first hypothesis, positing a positive correlation between the influence of content creators and the perception of providing real and qualitative information, is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 seeks to assess the level of awareness and importance attributed to sustainability in cosmetic purchases by examining the correlation between the familiarity with the term "sustainability" and the degree to which consumers purchase sustainable cosmetic products. The Pearson coefficient calculated between the questions was determined to be 0.728, indicating a strong positive correlation. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, which shows a positive correlation between familiarity with sustainability and the purchase of sustainable cosmetic products, is confirmed.

In order to investigate how socioeconomic factors impact consumer choices, Hypothesis 3 looks at the relationship between monthly income and preferences for environmentally friendly cosmetics. The Pearson coefficient obtained for Hypothesis 3 was 0.22, suggesting a very weak correlation between monthly income and preferences for sustainable cosmetic products. This weak correlation suggests that there is insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between income and preference for sustainable products.

Hypothesis 4 investigates the relationship between the primary use of social networks for information and the influence of online content creators on cosmetic purchases in order to better understand preferred information channels and their effects on purchasing behavior. The Pearson coefficient calculated for Hypothesis 4 was 0.183, indicating a very weak positive correlation between the primary use of social networks for information and the influence of online content creators on cosmetic purchases. Consequently, Hypothesis 4, which suggests a correlation between social network use and influencers' influence, is unconfirmed.

Results and discussions

Firstly, it is evident that there exists a robust demand for cosmetic products, with an overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) indicating their participation in purchasing such items. Which emphasizes how attractive and relevant cosmetics are in today's consumer culture.

Despite the burgeoning popularity of online shopping platforms, a substantial portion of respondents (66.4%) express a preference for acquiring cosmetic products through physical retail outlets. This emphasizes why, even with the retail industry moving toward digital, in-person cosmetic shopping still has enduring appeal. The survey also reveals the frequency of cosmetic purchases, with a substantial 42.3% choosing monthly restocks. This indicates a pattern of recurring purchases, suggesting a great chance for merchants to satisfy this consistent demand. The study reveals a noteworthy trend: consumers are becoming more conscious of sustainability when making cosmetic purchases. Consumers' increasing eco-awareness is demonstrated by the fact that ingredients, packaging, and brand ethics are now important considerations when making decisions. The study also explores subtle product preferences, showing that skincare and personal hygiene are more important than hair and body care.

Businesses can use this information to develop more effective marketing campaigns and product ideas. Instagram and TikTok are the two most powerful social media platforms in terms of marketing impact. Here, influencers have enormous sway, underscoring the critical role that digital advertisements and influencer marketing play in enticing consumers to buy cosmetics. An analysis has been conducted to determine the mean scores across four pivotal criteria impacting the acquisition of cosmetic products: Ingredients, Sustainability, Packaging, and Price. These averages give significant insights into the hierarchical significance assigned by consumers to each criteria during the evaluation process for cosmetic buying's.

Table 1. Mean scores across four pivotal criteria impacting the acquisition of cosmetic products: Ingredients, Sustainability, Packaging

Ingredients: Mean = 1.9524
Sustainability: Mean = 1.7333
Packaging: Mean = 1.7590
Price: Mean = 1.7236

Source: Authors' own research

Therefore, the criterion with the highest mean is represented by "Ingredients," with an approximate mean of 1.9524. This indicates that consumers place the greatest importance on ingredients when considering the purchase of cosmetic products.

Conclusion

The Research confirms that influencers have a big impact in steering consumers toward sustainable products. They're like the compass guiding eco-conscious choices in the beauty aisle.

Consumers crave genuine, top-notch content from influencers when they're shopping. They trust the real deal over anything else. How much people care about sustainability really sways what they buy in the cosmetics world. It's an important factor that drives consumer choices.

Social networks are where it's at for cosmetic info and persuasion. This shift to digital means brands need to team up with influencers to spread the sustainability word to the right crowd.

In conclusion, sustainable approach is not only a necessity but also a competitive advantage in an increasingly environmentally and socially conscious market environment.

Even all the conclusions of the above, the research had also some limits, considering the short time frame for obtaining answers. The research took place within a specific period of time, and the high speed of evolving the nature of influencer marketing and sustainability trends could impact the relevance of the findings of this research over time. Definitely, short time means small amount of sample which also limited the research. As future directions, it is a good point to start next with conducting longitudinal studies which could provide insights into how the impact of influencer-driven sustainability endorsements evolves over time, allowing for a deeper understanding of trends and sustained consumer behavior versus this one. Also, complementing these quantitative findings with qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could offer a richer understanding of consumer motivations and perceptions related to influencer-driven sustainability endorsements.

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