

Impact of YouTube Content Credibility on the Skincare Industry in Sri Lanka: Expertise as a Moderator

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YouTube emerged as the world's most used video content sharing platform, with over 1.9 billion monthly active users. In Sri Lanka, it has become a popular social media platform among content creators, particularly in the skincare industry. This study examines the impact of YouTube content creators' credibility on consumer purchase intention within Sri Lanka's skincare industry, with a specific focus on creator expertise as a moderating factor. The study conceptualises credibility through four core dimensions: trustworthiness, attractiveness, information quality, and entertainment value. While previous research has extensively examined content creator credibility, the moderating role of expertise has received limited attention. Consumers frequently rely on YouTube content creators to make purchasing decisions, but not all creators possess expertise in skincare. This discrepancy can lead to confusion about credibility, high engagement but low conversion rates, and potential damage to brand trust. Addressing this gap, the study provides insights into the interplay between credibility, expertise, and consumer purchase intention in Sri Lanka.

A quantitative approach with a deductive methodology was employed in this research. Primary data were collected from 362 individuals over the age of 12 who actively engage with skincare-related content on YouTube. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, and five hypotheses were tested to examine the relationship between content creator credibility and consumer purchase intention, with expertise assessed as a moderating variable.

The findings indicate that trustworthiness, information quality, and entertainment value significantly influence consumer purchase intention, while attractiveness does not have a direct effect. Moreover, contrary to existing literature, creator expertise did not moderate the relationship between credibility and purchase intention. This suggests that Sri Lankan consumers prioritise trust and engaging content over the perceived expertise

of content creators. The results further highlight that consumers tend to trust everyday content creators or familiar figures more than recognised experts, making them more susceptible to influence from relatable and accessible sources.

The scope of this study is limited to the skincare industry and YouTube and does not explore platforms such as Instagram, which can have a large impact on purchase intention. Additionally, the findings are specific to the Sri Lankan market and may not be globally generalisable due to cultural nuances and differences in consumer behaviour. The study also relied on self-reported data, which may introduce biases, and only examined one moderate variable, potentially overlooking other significant factors.

This research makes valuable theoretical and practical contributions. It underscores the importance of credibility dimensions, particularly trustworthiness, information quality, and entertainment value, in shaping consumer purchase intention within the Sri Lankan context. Marketers can leverage these insights to develop more effective influencer marketing strategies by prioritising authentic, engaging, and informative content rather than focusing solely on creator expertise or attractiveness. Content creators, in turn, should emphasise delivering accurate, high quality information while fostering strong engagement with their audiences. Future research could explore additional moderating variables such as source credibility, demographic influences, and cultural differences, providing a more comprehensive understanding of content creator influence on consumer behaviour. This study lays the groundwork for further investigations into the evolving role of expertise in digital marketing.

Keywords: *Creator Expertise, Purchase Intention, Skincare Industry, Source of Credibility, YouTube Content Creators*