

Impact of Social Media Influencers' Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intention with Special Reference to the Beauty and Personal Care Industry among Females of Gen Z in Sri Lanka: with the Mediating Effect on Brand Trust

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The personal care industry of Sri Lanka is features with significant dynamics whilst sector specific managerial and practical issues are also found due to market volatility. Accordingly, this study examines the impact of social media influencers' credibility on consumer purchase intentions, with a focus on Gen Z females in Sri Lanka's beauty and personal care industry. It investigates how influencers' credibility characterized by attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise affects brand trust and subsequently shapes purchasing behavior. The research aims to bridge empirical and practical gaps in understanding the mediating role of brand trust in influencer marketing within the Sri Lankan context.

A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed among Gen Z females in Sri Lanka. The questionnaire measured influencers' credibility, brand trust, and purchase intentions using a five point Likert scale. Data analysis involved correlation and regression tests to examine relationships among the variables, with special attention to the mediating effect of brand trust.

The results demonstrate a significant positive relationship between influencers' credibility and both brand trust and purchase intention. Brand trust was confirmed as a partial mediator, enhancing the direct effect of influencer credibility on purchase intention. These findings align with prior studies while emphasizing the critical role of influencers in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors in the Sri Lankan beauty and personal care market.

The study focuses exclusively on Gen Z females in Sri Lanka's beauty and personal care sector, limiting the generalizability of findings to other demographics, industries, or cultural contexts. Furthermore, the rapid evolution of social media platforms and marketing strategies may influence the long-term applicability of the results.

Theoretically, the study contributes to evaluate how influencer marketing could result in purchase intention whilst searching the power of brand trust as a mediating mechanism. As per the research context examined, this study offers actionable insights for marketers, emphasizing the need to collaborate with credible influencers to enhance brand trust and purchase intentions. Future research could further examine cross industry applications and the role of content quality and engagement metrics in influencer credibility.

Keywords: *Social Media Influencers, Credibility, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention, Gen Z, Beauty and Personal Care Industry*