

From Likes to Buy: The Impact of Instagram Influencers on Cosmetic Purchase Intentions

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of social media has altered contemporary marketing practices in interacting with customers and brand success. The social media influencers (SMIs) are instrumental in creating successful brand stories and influencing consumer purchase decisions. Compared to other marketing activities the SMIs facilitate in developing more cordial relationships with customers that ultimately increase customer loyalty. SMIs role in the field of beauty and fashion is more significant in shaping consumer decisions and brand success. The present research investigates the effect of Instagram influencers on consumer intentions and attitudes while buying beauty and cosmetic products. It analyzes how popular social media influenced consumer purchasing choices. Social media acts as a pivotal driver in shaping contemporary marketing strategies and transforming consumer behavior. Study in hand used the Social Influence Theory (SIT) in determining how people conform to socially perceived norms and actions within their online communities. The social media influencer acts as social opinion leaders, influencing consumer choices and buying habits towards a preferred direction by creating feelings of belonging and trust. Instagram is the major social media platform to consider when examining the impact created by SMIs. This research focuses on female users of cosmetics in Islamabad and Rawalpindi using the quantitative survey approach. The study obtained responses from 350 females using non-probability convenience sampling and Structural Equation Modelling done by using the software PLS-SEM and SPSS 23. The results confirm that homophily (perceived similarity with the influencer), product-matchup (alignment between the influencer and endorsed product), and content quality (relevance, creativity, and credibility of posts) demonstrate positive effect on purchase intention, mediated by consumer attitude.

Keywords: consumer attitude, cosmetic industry, influencer, intention, social media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

The social media platforms have significantly empowered influencers like Instagrammers, YouTubers, and bloggers and help them in the expansion of influencer marketing. (Gonzalez-Mohino & Cabeza-Ramirez, 2022). Social media's widespread expansion has transformed influencers as valuable social connection assets that can help marketers in achieving their marketing objectives (Tarabieh et al., 2024). Acting as key facilitators, SMIs function as strategic connectors linking brands with consumers while driving the evolution of purchase intentions through persuasive content. Around 93% of marketers prefer engaging influencers to communicate with their online followers (Abdullah et al., 2023). The global influencer marketing is growing

with every passing year, in 2019 it was valued US\$148 million, in next five years it crossed US\$248 million and will reach to US\$337 million by 2027 (Pan et al., 2024).

According to Frantzeskos, (2022) the worldwide value of cosmetic industry is around US\$ 532 billion. The cosmetic industry available data confirmed that the annual growth rate stands around 4% across developed and emerging markets (Abdullah et al., 2023). The growing reliance on social media platforms like Meta, YouTube & Twitter is increasing with every passing day for the promotion of beauty and cosmetics brands by the marketers. (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). The social media influencer are creating more interactive and engaging social media contents to develop personal relationships with their audiences (Masuda et al., 2022). The influencers are able to gain more trust and credibility among young consumers as compared to conventional celebrity endorsements (Gonzalez-Mohino & Cabeza-Ramirez, 2022).

The SMIs have transformed the buying habits of the beauty products consumers (Frantzeskos, 2022). Now consumer interact with brand, analyze the consumer's reviews, evaluate brand communication before making a purchase (Deepika, 2023). The study in hand evaluates the role of SMIs upon purchase intention towards cosmetic & beauty brands. The major factors under considerations are homophily product matchup and content quality. The main purpose is to explore how these factors alter consumer attitudes and decisions making process.

Homophily is the phenomenon that help people to associate themselves and develop bonds with others who are similar to them that help them to increased engagement (Gonzalez-Mohino & Cabeza-Ramirez, 2022). While product matchup stresses the similarities between influencer's and the product being endorsed that make the association more authentic (D & D, 2022). The content quality, credibility and esthetic appeal significantly influence attitude and purchase intention. (Azak et al., 2022). These elements collectively play an instrumental role in the popularity of the influencer and generating consumer behavior (Gomes et al., 2022).

The consumer perception about a brand links with SMIs, their credibility & image in the eyes of consumers. Yet, choosing appropriate SMIs is a key challenge, as the wrong selection tends to damage the reputation of brand. (T. J. Chan et al., 2024). Establishing partnerships with influencers whose values reflect the brands identity as essential because they act as third-party endorsers influencing attitude of consumers and buying decisions. (Afzal et al., 2024).

The study responds to close prevailing gaps in scholarly discourse by examining the widespread influence of SMIs on consumer attitudes. By examining homophily, influencer-product alignment, and content quality, this study clarifies the contribution of influencer marketing in directing consumers' purchase intentions within the cosmetics sector. This study also examines the attributes of Pakistani beauty care companies while selecting social media influencers for Instagram advertising, thereby addressing a gap in existing research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers rose to prominence in the early 21 century as central players in the marketing industry (Ilieva et al., 2024). SMIs are categorized into five levels celebrity (1,000,000 plus followers' high culture capital), mega (1,000,000 plus platform famous), macro (100K to 1,000,000 wide reach), micro 10K-200K niche- oriented) and Nano (0 to 10K extremely

authentic). Higher levels have more influence but lower levels focus on accessibility and authenticity suggesting a tradeoff (Tarabieh et al., 2024). Brands use celebrity endorsement for their expert knowledge and active lifestyles to build strong online presence (Zaman et al., 2024). Influencer marketing taps into influencers' trustworthiness and popularity to foster brand loyalty, making it a favorite method for enhancing brand presence and driving sales. The Influencer marketing as a part of internet advertising helps brands in creating awareness, enhancing brand loyalty, credibility and popularity which help in increasing brand value (Mabkhot et al., 2022). The influence of SMIs is significant in cosmetic & beauty industries, where they increase brand image and brand equity (Ilieva et al., 2024).

The world leading cosmetic companies like L'Oreal, Kylie cosmetics, Rare Beauty, Maybelline, NYX, Sephora, and elf are engaging SMIs to interact with their consumers. Similarly, the major Pakistani beauty brands including Masarrat Misbah Makeup, Medora, Rivaj UK, Luscious Cosmetics, Atiqah Odho Cosmetics, Miss Rose, and Zayfied are now collaborating with SMIs to connect with consumers and effectively marketing their products. A notable example is reality star Kylie Jenner, with over 202 million Instagram followers, demonstrating the vast reach of influencers (Zaman et al., 2024). Traditional celebrities and online entrepreneurs have cemented themselves as integral SMIs (S. Zhou et al., 2021). Moreover, interactive content of social media is considered crucial in building consumers' brand knowledge. Moreover, interactive content on social media is seen as important for building brand knowledge among consumers. Social media interactive content is important in developing knowledge about the brand and capturing consumers (Abdullah et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2022). This strategy enables brand to connect more with their audience in ways that increase the visibility of the brand, as well as incite consumer behavior through effective, genuine influencer collaborations (Lin et al., 2021).

Impact of Homophily on Purchase Intention

A homophily attitude is described as "the similarity between people who communicate in terms of their behavior" (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Homophily which is an important concept is used to describe the similarity between a person's characteristics and those of others (Bu et al., 2022a). Homophily was first researched in the field of communication but has come under focus in marketing particularly in social and virtual environments (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). Interpersonal communication's fundamental principle of homophily states that people with the same characteristics communicate more often. (Gonzalez-Mohino & Cabeza-Ramirez, 2022). Sokolova & Kefi, (2020) observes that this principle applies to virtual setting as well, whereby individuals tend to connect more with people who have similar interests, values, and behavior (Atta, 2020).

In social media, Influencer-follower relations are heavily influenced by perceived similarity. Individuals tend to engage with influencers who symbolize their taste, desires, and life choices (T. J. Chan et al., 2024). The higher the homophily perception the greater the interaction and relationships developed between influencers and consumers. In addition, homophily is an important factor in influencing an influencer's perceived credibility, as others tend to trust those influencers with whom they identify (Abdullah et al., 2023). Based on this dynamic, perceived homophily serves as a pivotal antecedent consumer purchase intentions, affirming the relevance of psychological congruence to marketing and online consumer behavior studies (Santiago & Serralha, 2022).

H1: Homophily demonstrates a strong positive relationship with purchase intention.

Content Quality as a Determinant of Purchase Intention

Content attributes include several traits that influence the quality, influence on performance of influencer created content, (D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2021). Literature show that well written content significantly influence Instagram user's intention (Chetioui et al., 2020).

Content quality plays an instrumental role in ensuring the success of digital marketing initiatives. Xiao et al., (2021) the blog that engages their readers through quality contents increase product endorsement. Customers purchase those products that fulfill their needs. Similarly customer engagement with the social media influencer generally enhances purchase intention. Munsch, (2021) highlighted that in cosmetic industry content quality heavily influenced consumer perceptions. The uniqueness and originality are critical attributes of influencer content. L. Zhou et al., (2023) the innovative and distinctive are the characteristics of uniqueness. Research confirmed that originality of the content strengthens consumer trust and influences purchase intention (D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2021). However, Tanpoco et al., (2023) has different opinion and according to him uniqueness does not always results into increased purchase intention. This is because sometime uniqueness is attributed to soaring prices, exclusivity, which may discourage consumers' purchase intention.

Generally, quality, uniqueness and authenticity are considered the desired attributes for influencer-generated content. However, there are certain factors that influence contents are consumer expectations, market trends, and pricing strategies. An appropriate strategy based on a combination of these characteristics is critical to maximize content effectiveness and drive consumer engagement (Tanpoco et al., 2023).

H2: Content quality exerts a significant positive relationship with purchase intention.

Product Matchup as a Determinant of Purchase Intention

The terms match-up, fit, and congruence are often used interchangeably in marketing literature. The hypothesis of matchup suggests that the persuasiveness of SMIs determined the fit with the product being endorsed. A greater degree of congruence between the product and the influencer is, the greater the persuasiveness of the endorsement with more consumer engagement.(Chen & Dermawan, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). For instance, an aesthetically appealing spokesperson endorsing beauty products strengthens information processing and attitude building.

Following this, studies indicate that positive fit between SMIs and endorsed product has a considerable positive impact on marketing effectiveness (Lee & Eastin, 2020). Influencers as representatives encompass the attributes of the endorsed brand to achieve maximum credibility and consumer trust (Rahmani, 2022). An optimal fit endorsement contributes positively to brand perception and consumers,' thereby brand positioning. In addition, partnering influencers with brands can maximize marketing performance (Carlson et al., 2020).

In addition to influencer-product congruence, product compatibility and fulfilling consumer expectation significantly contributes towards customer satisfaction. When a product perform as per the expectations, it enhance perceived value (Rahmani, 2022). When a product fails to fulfil consumer's expectations, influencer also loses its credibility. This discrepancy impact the authenticity of the SMI perceived by the consumers (Batra et al., 2022).

Furthermore, when an SMI does not have a coherent, synergistic relationship with the supported product, especially if there are no common attributes or thematic match people are more apt to recall the influencer than the product itself (Tanpoco et al., 2023). Such is the “vampire effect” where the presence of the influencer overwhelms the product, diminishing the impact of the validation and possibly damaging their brand recall and consumer interest (Rahmani, 2022). Therefore, having a good influencer product alignment is not just necessary for branding trustworthiness but also to maintain marketing efficacy.

H3: Product matchup positively influences purchase intention.

Homophily impact on Consumers' Attitudes towards Influencer

This study investigated the role of homophily and its impact on consumer behavior. It was discovered that perceived homophily & authenticity drive positive consumer behavior. Consumers are often swayed by SMIs who have matching personality attributes with consumers. Homophily helps in motivating individual's attitude towards influencers. Marketing performance can be enhanced by using the strategies that promote perceived similarity between influencers and target audiences.

Homophily, which indicate the perceived similarity among consumers and impact consumer attitude towards SMIs (Ladhari et al., 2020). Higher homophily with an influencer significantly enhance marketing communications that increase consumers' trust and positive attitudes (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022). The research in hand embarked on the relevance of homophily and revealed that homophily is a strong predictor of customers' engagement and purchase intention among SMIs. Past research confirmed that perceived similarity with influencers enhanced consumer trust and positive attitude which transformed into stronger engagement and intention.

Bu et al., (2022) explored influencer marketing role in homophily and its relationship with consumer behavior. The perceived homophily and authenticity drive positive consumer behavior and consumers perceived social media influencer like themselves. These results highlight the central position of homophily in influencing consumer attitude towards influencer. It is recommended that marketers adopt strategies promoting perceived similarity between influencers and target audiences to generate positive consumer attitudes and enhance marketing performance.

H4: Homophily positively alters consumer attitudes.

Role of Content Quality in Shaping Consumers' Attitudes

The attitudes, thinking, lifestyles, opinions, and consumption behavior of SMIs often impact consumer decision making. The credibility, respectability, and integrity of the recommender are reflected in the trustworthiness of an endorsement (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Tanpoco et al., (2023) suggest that relevance and genuineness are key, insisting that in a saturated digital landscape, consumers attract more towards the content which interests them and perceive more authentic. A better-quality content not only makes an influencer more visible but also reinforces audience retention and long-term commitment. In addition, high quality content is crucial, exerting a strong effect on consumer behavior (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

H5: Content quality exerts a significant influence on consumer attitudes.

Effect of Product Matchup Shapes Consumers' Attitudes towards Influencer

Product matchup, defined as the alignment between a social media influencer and the promoted product, exerts a strong impact on consumer attitudes. The congruence helps improve perceived authenticity and credibility that help in creating positive consumer perceptions (Nguyen, 2021). The contemporary research emphasis on the importance of congruence. Pan et al., (2024) evaluated 251 studies and his meta-analysis revealed that influencer-product congruence is an essential driver towards influencer marketing success.

Belanche et al., (2021), explained that the relationship between the brand & influencer enhances consumer trust & purchase. The past research indicated that strong product match in influencer marketing campaigns results in consumer positive attitudes & effective promotional campaigns.

H6: Effective products match up shapes favorable consumer attitudes.

Consumer Attitude towards SMI on purchase intention

Attitude is a key concept in psychology that represents one's evaluative reaction towards a particular object, ranging from effective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. (Kao & Du, 2020). Within behavioral theory, attitudes are internalized tendencies either to approach or avoid certain objects, people, or symbols. Positive or negative attitudes creates an impact on the perception of consumers towards brands, culminating in decision-making to purchase. (Kim et al., 2021).

Generally, attitude formation has been started in terms of direct experience and interactions with individuals and events. Given the emergence of digital communication, there is a rapidly increasing imperative to know how attitudes form in the absence of direct contact. Particularly in the existing context, customers form attitudes towards brands & services based on indirect interactions made possible by social media influencers (SMIs). Since social attitudes are shaped by the need to identify with people, key opinion leaders (KOLs), social communities, the influence of SMIs in shaping consumer behavior becomes more pertinent. Empirical research indicates that attitudes are interchangeable by means of online communication, but there is still no overwhelming evidence about the factors behind such changes.

Importantly, Abdullah et al., (2023) determined that attitude is the central factor for influencing intention to purchase. If consumers possess positive attitudes toward SMI, they will be more inclined to have faith in and comply with the influencer's suggestions, which will promote a greater chance of buying the promoted product. This outcome indicates authenticity & trustworthiness while incorporating the influencer's role in the marketing plans. Purchase intention is the term used in social media promotion to refer to the chances of a consumer purchasing a brand following exposure to influencer sponsored information, for example, advertisements, sponsored content, and product reviews. These measures help companies, as it allows them to evaluate sales performance and the usefulness of the social media marketing strategies (Lee et al., 2022).

Empirical studies highlight consumer attitude as a key mediator between influencer marketing & intention. This postulates that the influence of an individual's attitude alters intention to buy a brand. Consequently, brands need to make informed strategic partnerships with influencers whose values coverage with theirs and successfully build positive brand perceptions, thus catalyzing consumer engagement and sales (Abdullah et al., 2023).

H7: Consumer attitude positively influences purchase intention.

Consumer attitudes as a mediator of the relationship between antecedents (homophily, content quality, product matchup) and purchase intention

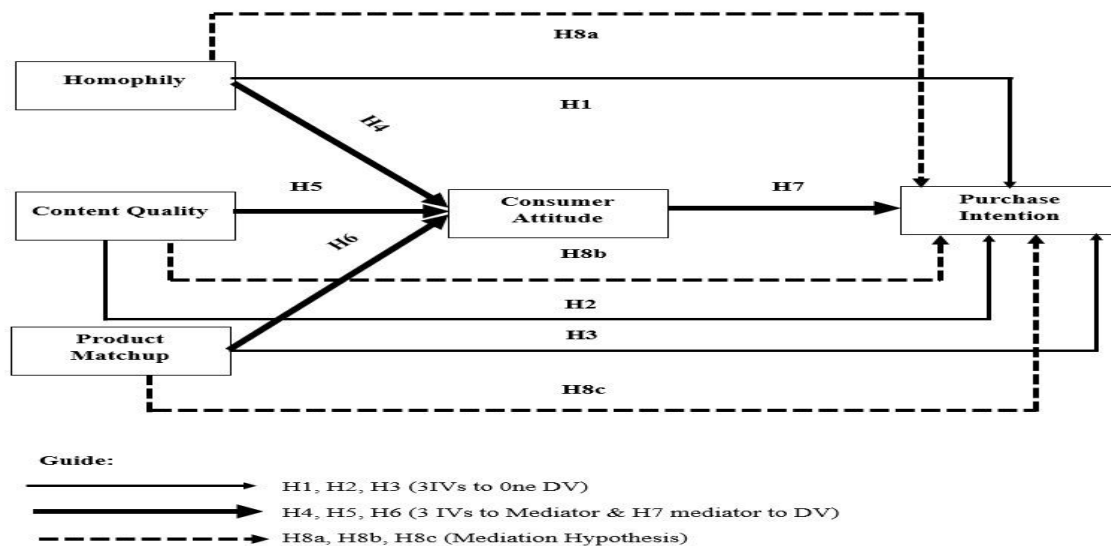
Homophily, or perceived similarity between consumers and the SMIs, has been found to build trust and believability, hence positive consumer attitude. For example, in a study Sokolova & Kefi, (2022) results indicated the influencer social attractiveness, and element of homophily, has significant impact on the credibility of the influencer, which subsequently influences intention to purchase. Quality of content also has a vital role in explaining consumer attitudes. Quality, stimulating, and credible content enhances trust among consumers and positively affects brand attitudes. Halim et al., (2020) Illustrated that higher content quality in influencer marketing has a considerable effect on meta users purchase intentions.

Product congruence, or the compatibility of the brand and the influencer, heavily influences endorsement effectiveness. Shan et al., (2020) discover that high congruence between SMIs and endorsed products increases marketing effectiveness because consumers see endorsement as more honest and credible. Together, these antecedents influence consumer attitudes that, in turn, mediate purchase intention. It is vital to understand these relationships to enhance influencer marketing effectiveness and brand performance.

H8 a: Consumer attitude mediates homophily and purchase intention relationship.

H8 b: Consumer attitude mediates the content quality and purchase intention relationship.

H8 c: Consumer attitude mediates the product matchup and purchase intention relationship.



METHODOLOGY

Procedures

Research used quantitative methods to examine the effect of SMIs on purchase intention and attitudes. PLS-SEM is used to analysis data in this research allowing the determination of intricate relationships between latent variables.

Measures

The study investigates independent and dependent variable relationships using a self-administered questionnaire. The measuring tool uses the Likert scale responses are categorized as 1 reflect strongly disagree while 5 indicatives of strongly agree (Nunan et al., 2020).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Sample

The selected sample was composed of 350 female respondents. These respondents were categorized into three age groups: 54.9% were between 18 and 25 years, 34.6% were between 26 and 30 years, and 10.6% were between 31 and 40 years.

Frequencies

The targeted respondents were 500 and out of 500 the 350 retained for analysis after excluding respondents without an Instagram account. The reliability of the survey instrument examined with Cronbach's Alpha, where values were above 0.7, considered satisfactory for internal consistency.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error	Cronbach's alpha
HP	3.3137	0.83431	-0.429	0.13	-0.925	0.26	0.935
CQ	3.2029	0.86038	-0.104	0.13	-0.776	0.26	0.753
PM	3.4333	0.94441	-0.492	0.13	-0.62	0.26	0.758
CA	3.3514	0.87818	-0.343	0.13	-0.763	0.26	0.793
PI	3.4771	0.90278	-0.139	0.13	-0.923	0.26	0.771

Note: HP= Homophily; CQ=Content Quality; PM=Product Matchup; CA=Consumer Attitude; PI=Purchase Intention N=350

4.3 Correlations

The analysis of Pearson correlation confirmed a statistically positive correlation between variables.

Correlations

	CA	CQ	HP	PI	PM
CA	1.000	0.559	0.492	0.568	0.466
CQ	0.559	1.000	0.557	0.539	0.486
HP	0.492	0.557	1.000	0.511	0.457
PI	0.568	0.539	0.511	1.000	0.543
PM	0.466	0.486	0.457	0.543	1.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: HP= Homophily; CQ=Content Quality; PM=Product Matchup; CA=Consumer attitude; PI=Purchase Intention

4.4 Path Analysis

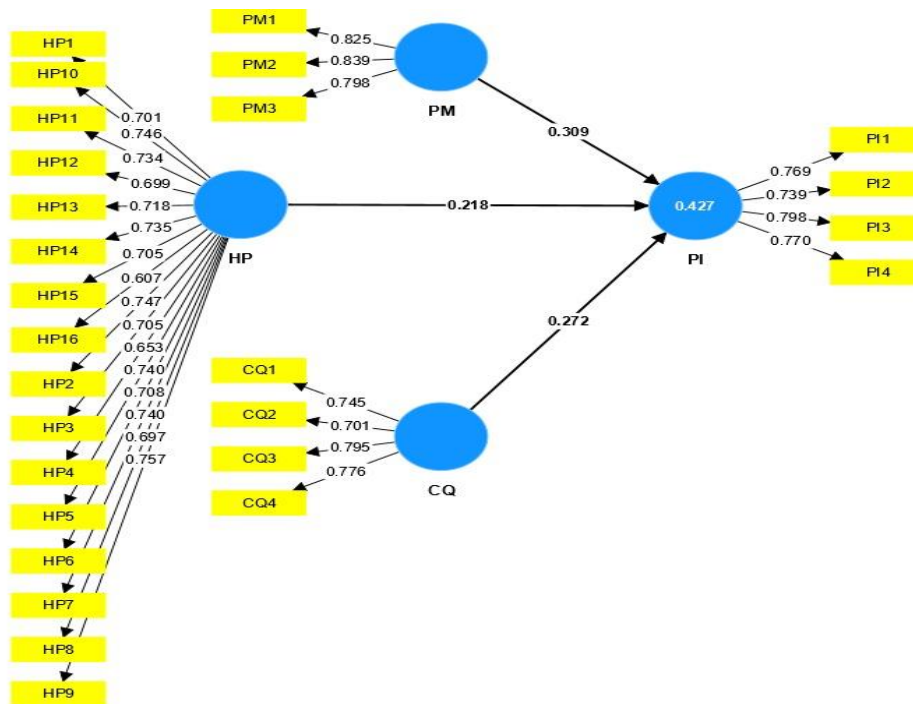


Figure 4.4.1 Path coefficient

The path coefficients confirmed that homophily, content quality, and product matchup are positively related to purchase intention. These relationships are explained as: homophily and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.221$, $p < 0.001$), content quality and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.001$), and product matchup and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.315$, $p < 0.001$). The β values indicate the strength of these relationships, while the p-values represent their statistical significance, as explained in the figure. Furthermore, the impact of these relationships is supported by the corresponding T statistics: 4.049, 5.329, and 6.320.

4.5 Mediation Model

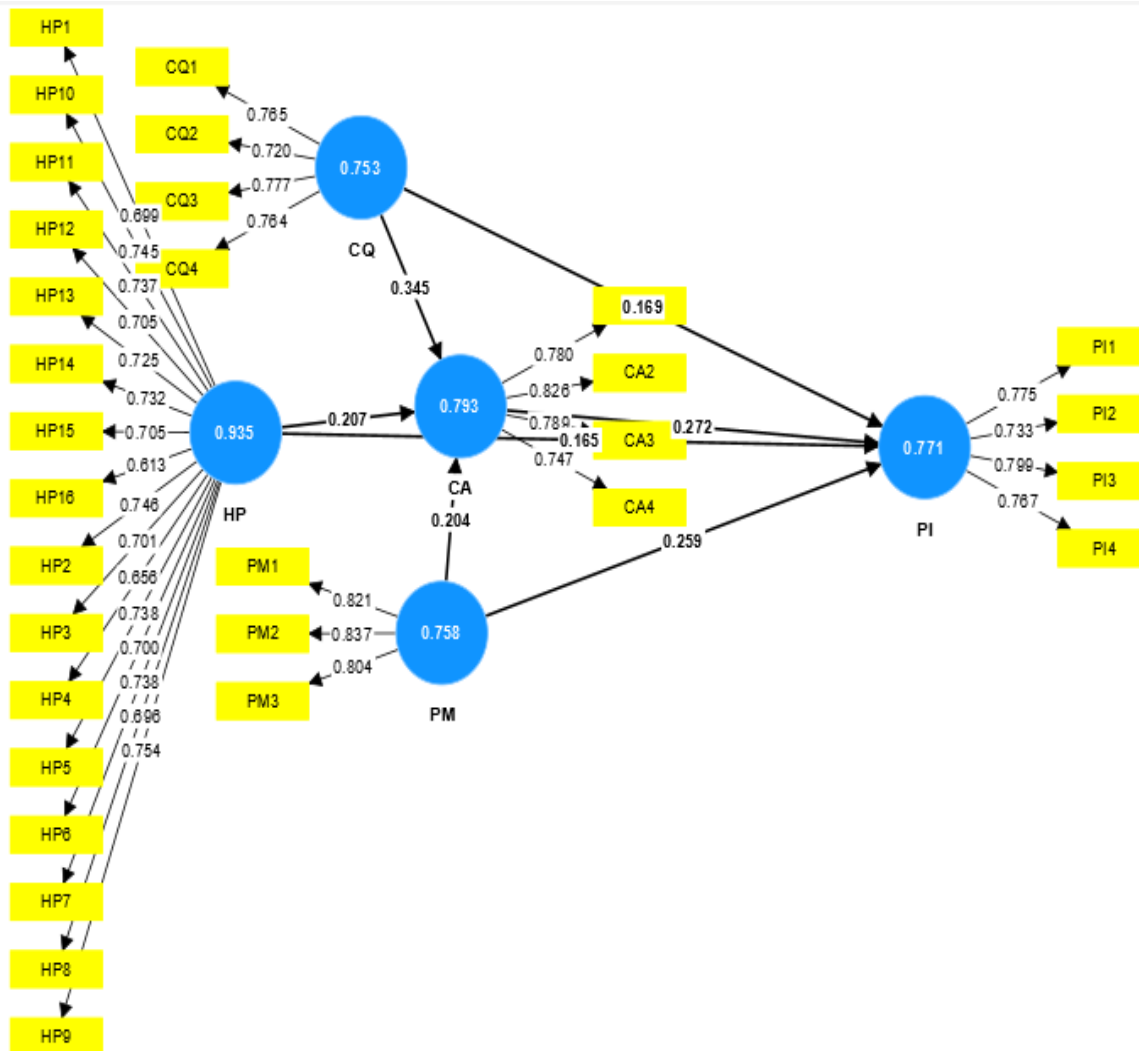


Figure 4.5.1 Mediation Model

Path Coefficient

The model highlighted that attitude mediates between homophily and intention. The path coefficient reveals a significant relationship between homophily and attitude ($\beta = 0.206$, $p < 0.001$), and between consumer attitude and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.272$, $p < 0.001$). The mediation effect is confirmed through the results of indirect effect ($\beta = 0.056$, $p < 0.001$), establishing that attitude mediates the relationship between homophily and intention. Moreover, the positive significance of this mediation is further supported by the T value of 2.916 ($p < 0.001$). Consequently, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8a, H8b, and H8c were all supported.

Table 15: Path Coefficients (β)

Hypothesis	Relation	β	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Results
H1	HP -> PI	0.221	0.223	0.054	4.049	0.000	supported
H2	CQ -> PI	0.263	0.264	0.050	5.329	0.000	supported
H3	PM -> PI	0.315	0.314	0.050	6.320	0.000	supported
H4	HP -> CA	0.206	0.210	0.058	3.551	0.000	supported
H5	CQ -> CA	0.345	0.346	0.065	5.329	0.000	supported
H6	PM -> CA	0.204	0.202	0.060	3.430	0.001	supported
H7	CA -> PI	0.272	0.271	0.056	4.873	0.000	supported
H8 (a)	HP -> CA -> PI	0.056	0.057	0.019	2.916	0.000	supported
H8 (b)	CQ -> CA -> PI	0.094	0.094	0.026	3.650	0.004	supported
H8 (c)	PM -> CA -> PI	0.056	0.055	0.021	2.595	0.009	supported

CA: Consumer Attitude; CQ: Content Quality; HP: Homophily; PI: Purchase intention; PM: Product Matchup

FINDING'S SUMMARY

Hypotheses	Description	Results
1	<i>Homophily demonstrates a strong positive relationship with purchase intention.</i>	Accepted
2	<i>Content quality exerts a significant positive relationship with purchase intention.</i>	Accepted
3	<i>Product matchup positively influences purchase intention.</i>	Accepted
4	<i>Homophily positively alters consumer attitudes.</i>	Accepted
5	<i>Content quality exerts a significant influence on consumer attitudes.</i>	Accepted
6	<i>Effective products match up shapes favorable consumer attitudes.</i>	Accepted
7	<i>Consumer attitude positively influences purchase intention.</i>	Accepted
8 a	<i>Consumer attitude mediates homophily and purchase intention relationship.</i>	Accepted
8 b	<i>Consumer attitude mediates the content quality and purchase intention relationship.</i>	Accepted
8 c	<i>Consumer attitude mediates the product matchup and purchase intention relationship.</i>	Accepted

Discussions

The findings interpret the significant roles of homophily, content quality, and product matchup in evaluating consumer attitudes & intentions. The perceived similarity in the form of homophily

was found to positively influence purchase intentions. The result supported Mainolfi & Vergura, (2022) worked who mentioned that social media content creators through their credibility persuade consumers to seek ideas and recommendations.

The research further highlighted the quality of the content, influenced the purchase intention. The findings supports the work of Casaló et al., (2020), stated the post quality, originality, and creativity are important in creating opinion leadership. The content quality links with consumer involvement. Similarly, the compatibility of influencer and product matchup positively influence purchase intentions. Nguyen, (2021) corroborated this, as it was stated that consumers give more positive ratings if, perceived fit exist between the influencer & brand, hence amplifying the power of the endorsement to persuade.

Furthermore, the research also discovered that homophily had a positive impact on consumer attitude. This resonates with Hamzah et al., (2021), who posited the distinctive & interactive content enhances consumer engagement & brand positioning. Additionally, Garg & Bakshi, (2024) quality content is a key environmental cue in informing online consumer behavior, with the significant institutes towards influencers. The positive impact of product matchup on attitudes is consistent with the hypothesis of matchup, which holds that persuasion is increased when the messenger and message are in agreement (Shan et al., 2020).

Lastly, the research confirmed that consumer attitude as a mediator between the antecedents under investigation & purchase intention. Alhabash et al., (2021) mentioned that characteristics of consumers e.g., value, behavior, background, age, and appearance are linked to consumer attitudes, which positively affect purchase intentions. These results confirmed that consumers associate themselves with those influencers who produce high-quality content which develops positive attitudes & improves purchase intentions.

Theoretical Significance

The present work makes several significant contributions with reference to social influence theory (SIT) and explains the crucial role played by social media influencers on purchase intention. SIT highlighted the consumers attitudes and behaviors are affected through perceived social norms and behaviors. The result revealed that consumers' intentions are shaped through the recommendation of influencer in the form of compliance, perceive similarity with influencers as identification, and aligning influencer content with personal value through internalization. These instruments provide a theoretical basis for investigating how homophily, product influencer fit, & content quality drive consumer's trust & engagement in the cosmetics industry.

Influencers, as change agent influence their followers through their content, personality and recommendation that alter consumer attitude and purchase intentions (F. Chan, 2022). The results confirmed that consumer decision making process significantly influences through influences endorsement and content. Furthermore, the current research studied multiple influencers attributes lifestyle, values, voice, and style that help craft consumers perceptions other than the homophily, content quality, and product matchup (Rahmani, 2022).

In cosmetics industry, the tangible & intangible features are crucial in driving attitude & purchase intention. Such statements confirmed the influence of their role in altering consumer attitude and intentions through their credibility or expertise but also because of the values, attitudes, and persona they possess. The study facilitated existing literature by analyzing the influence of SMIs

& their characteristics on purchase intentions. While empirical findings explained tangible and intangible aspects of an influencer's personality as major determinants of consumer behavior. Inclusion of SIT within the model adds value and explains the impact of SMIs on attitude & purchase intentions that can be helpful for both academic and applied settings.

Implications for Practice

The outcome of this work provides valuable practical guidelines to brand managers, marketing professional & influencer decision makers within the influencer marketing discipline. The results will facilitate the marketing managers in selecting right social media influencers for their brands that can alter their consumer purchase intentions towards their brands (Yasa et al., 2020). The result further emphasized the critical relation between influencers and their followers. The positive attitude of SMIs have significant effect on purchasing decisions (Blanche et al., 2021).

The social media influencers must invest in building a socially engaging and relatable image for their followers in the cosmetics industry. Having a positive and genuine image can increase credibility and facilitate in creating long lasting relationship with their followers. (Ao et al., 2023). Perceived homophily, in which consumers attached themselves with influencers by finding shared values, behaviors, and looks. Consumer attitude significantly influences the homophily, content quality and product matchup. Thus, brand managers should choose those influencers who have the same values, and behavior with their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Furthermore, the study stresses the importance of social media in enabling enhanced customer engagement. Influencers increase their power & increased consumer engagement by interacting with the followers meaningfully (Liang et al., 2022). These actionable insights facilitate marketing managers and influencers creating result-oriented marketing strategies.

Limitation and Future Recommendation

While this study offers significant contributions but still there are limitations. The cross-sectional design of the research can be a limitation to the generalizability of the results. The nature of cross-sectional studies may establish casual links with the variables that may not represent reality. This constraint implies the necessity for additional research with longitudinal or experiment designs to allow stronger casual inferences (Han & Pyun, 2021).

Second, the information was drawn from a restricted sample of Islamabad and Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The findings, therefore, may not be generalizable to other geographical areas or in educational settings, hence limiting their external validity. Future research would be useful with the wider sample that spans different regions to make the results more generalizable.

Lastly, this research was specially targeted at a female target market in the cosmetic industry in Pakistan, which could constrain the external validity of the findings across multiple markets or sectors. To rectify this, future studies could work with a more diverse market, both male and female consumers alike, and across various industries to try to figure out more fully the implications of influencer marketing on larger scales. Future researchers should also consider looking at cultural differences, ethnic background or other similar factors which could influence individual's attitudes & intentions.

CONCLUSION

The growing popularity of social media, especially apps like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter etc., turned influencer marketing into a vital part of consumer engagement. This study explored the role of SMIs and their influence on consumer intention with the focus on beauty and the cosmetics industry. By concentrating on some of the important influencer specific variables such as homophily, content quality, and product matchup, the research evaluated the positive relation between these constructs and purchase intentions.

The results confirmed that homophily, product matchup, and quality of content are all positively related to intention. These results confirmed the relevance of matching influencer characteristics with the selected products. Furthermore, results confirmed that the consumer's attitudes play a fundamental mediating role between antecedents & intentions. These results supported that consumer's positive attitudes toward influencers can improve their willingness to buy the beauty and cosmetics products..

The SIT is the key theory to explain the role of influencers in influencing consumer behavior. SIT defines that consumers' attitudes and behaviors reflect through their social norms and behavior with respect to their social networks. Influencers in this case function as social agents whose influence affects attitudes and purchasing intentions. The research highlighted online social dynamics of influencers that influence consumers. Contextually, the results confirmed that beauty influencers significantly shape intention & attitude of the female consumers while buying cosmetic products.

Despite these insights, the study has some limitations such as its focus on a female audience in Pakistan. The future research should explore other nationalities, cultures, and demographics. Furthermore, mixed-method research designs could yield new dimensions that facilitate the marketing managers and practitioners developing better marketing strategies for their brands.

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