

A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF BEAUTY VIDEO BLOGGERS (VLOGGERS) AS COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL CELEBRITIES ON FEMALE CONSUMERS IN MUMBAI

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Abstract

This research addresses the ongoing debate between celebrity endorsements and social media influencers as marketing communication tools. Brands using celebrities as advertising tools is not a foreign concept and has been there around since ages. With time, the definition of celebrities has changed and different personalities have come to fit that mould. The advent of the social media influencer has taken the world by storm and this study does its bit in proving that they trump high on the scale of authenticity, relatability and credibility. Results have shown that these qualities lead them into appearing more trustworthy as compared to traditional celebrities and exert a positive influence on their audience with having an impact on their purchase behaviour.

Keywords: *influencer, celebrity, micro-celebrity, influencer marketing, eWOM, social media marketing, YouTube marketing, relatability, authenticity, credibility, source credibility, purchase intention, persuasion knowledge.*

INTRODUCTION

Celebrity endorsements are a popular way for marketers to promote their brands, products, and services. By transferring the positive image and characteristics of a celebrity onto the brand, marketers aim to trigger consumers' intent to purchase or use the endorsed product or service (Atkin and Block 1983).

However, in addition to using 'traditional' celebrities such as actors, supermodels, and athletes to add value to their brand, companies increasingly turn to social media influencers (also called 'micro-celebrities'), such as vloggers, to endorse their brands (Marwick2015).

These "micro-celebrities" are seen as normal everyday people who have attained thousands or even millions of followers on these social media platforms. These individuals are known to the public, and their identification is based upon elements such as admiration, association, aspiration or recognition (Kutthakaphan & Chokesamritpol, 2013).

Although traditional celebrities have had great influence on our society's pop culture trends in the past, in recent years, new social media stars have been able to gain more audience and influence pop culture to greater extents than the traditional celebrity. This is elucidated by their ability to create communities where users feel more connected to the influencer through higher levels of engagement, authenticity, and relatability. (Nouri,2018)

CELEBRITIES INADVERTISING

Famous personalities promoting any brand creates a great degree of appeal and public trust would be high rather than when an unknown model(s) were to speak about a brand. (Kambitsis, Harahousou, Theodorakis, &Chatzibeis, 2002).

The following trends are evident in celebrity advertising-

Overshadowing the product - It so often happens that a celebrity steals the limelight and the target audience fails to notice the brand. Companies should select popular celebrities who can attract attention and convince the target audience, yet do not overshadow the brand.

Over-exposure - With celebrity advertising gaining momentum in the early 21st century, it was common to see celebrities endorsing multiple brands. This led to the problem of overexposure.

A celebrity using their status in society to promote a product, service or charity is termed as celebrity branding or advertising. There are a variety of ways in which celebrity branding can place; celebrities appearing in adverts for

a product, attending a charity or PR event, launching their own line of products or using their name as brand. There has been a new trend in celebrity advertising of late - using celebrity voice overs in advertisements. For instance, Mr. Amitabh Bachchan has a distinct voice which is easily recognizable even when he is not present on screen. Using voice overs is a comparatively subtle way of celebrity branding.

Target Audience Receptivity - Using the appropriate celebrity to appeal to the right target audience is essential. This is to ensure that the right connect is established between the celebrity and the customers and ultimately, the brand.

Risk to Advertiser - Celebrities are often embroiled in scandals and controversies which have the potential to negatively impact the brand they are associated with. This is a risk the advertiser has to bear and a moral clause should be implemented to deal with this issue.

Celebrities are commonly featured in campaigns for beauty companies and fashion houses. Sometimes that association surpasses the endorser's original claim to fame and we see an actress make headlines not for her craft but for her endorsement.

Celebrity endorsement has been popular since years in India with film stars endorsing multiple brands in different product categories. It is a costly proposition which enables Bollywood's leading stars to earn huge amounts of money. Globalisation has led to major players setting up shop in the country. Therefore, an understanding of the culture and the traditions of the Indian target audience is imperative to successfully operate in this country.

INFLUENCER MARKETING

A Beauty YouTuber, commonly referred to as a "beauty vlogger," "beauty guru," or "beauty influencer," or "Beautuber" is a person who creates and posts videos to YouTube about cosmetics, fashion, hair-styling, nail art, and other beauty-related topics. As of 2016, there were more than 5.3 million beauty videos on YouTube, and 86 percent of the top 200 beauty videos were made by beauty vloggers as opposed to beauty brands. (Wikipedia)

Influencer marketing can be defined as followed "identifying key communities and opinion leaders who are likely to talk about products and have the ability to influence the opinions of others." (Chaffey & Ellis Chadwick, 2012)

A recent study conducted by A-lehdet and Aikakausmedia regarding the role and responsibility of YouTubers showed that 75 percent of them believed to be role models for their viewers. According to the study, the YouTubers are also more than role models as they can also influence the consumption and buying decisions of their followers. Many YouTubers are doing commercial cooperation with brands for example by showing their products in their videos. In this situation, the companies have chosen to do influencer marketing and use these YouTubers as their brand advocates in their social media marketing strategy.

In addition to the branding done by the YouTubers for the companies, another type of branding is also the personal branding that the YouTubers are doing for themselves. Many YouTubers have a strong personal brand, something that distinguishes them from the other video makers (Kauppalehti, 2016).

CELEBRIFICATION ON YOUTUBE

The following concept is explained from the research paper *The Power of Influence: Traditional Celebrity vs. Social Media Influencer* by Melody Nouri,

Becoming a microcelebrity entails "thinking of oneself as a celebrity, and treating others accordingly" (Marwick, 2013a, p. 115). Microcelebrity produces the self as brand and commodity; online processes of celebrification today merge commodification and branding smoothly with intimacy and authenticity (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2015). YouTube boasts a heightened ability to serve as a technology of intimacy, affording the formation of affective bonds through both the visual and communicative elements of its interface (Berryman & Kavka, 2017).

The active processes of celebrification at play within YouTube's beauty community necessarily combine the social side of sharing personal information, footage of daily activities and building affective connections, with commercial aspects: namely self-branding, achieving high status and maintaining good reputations as professional, responsible and influential personalities (García-Rapp 2017). Particularly on YouTube, as a highly commercial platform based on 'delivering attention to ads' (Burgess 2011, 326), values such as authenticity and honesty are appreciated and even demanded on the platform.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Social media celebrities

An essential part of building an audience is creating this type of relationship with your viewers. Connecting with your audience on social media ensures that content creators receive constant feedback in the form of comments, likes, questions, praise, and overall reactions. Due to this engagement creating a sense of connectedness to a content creator, we see how audiences are able to build interpersonal relationships with the influencer.

Traditional Celebrities

Traditional celebrities face somewhat of a disconnect with their audience on social media platforms primarily, because they did not achieve fame on these platforms. Because they did not gain popularity by interacting with

their fans, they do not mind the separation from them.

Another thing that makes celebrities distant from their fan base is that oftentimes, they go as far as having others run their social media accounts.

RELATABILITY

Social mediacelebrities

'Reference group' is defined as a person/group of people who serve as a reference to an individual in forming values and attitudes, and in so doing provide consumers with a reference in their purchasing decisions (L.G. Schiffman, Hansen, & Kanuk, 2012). Several researchers argue that information is more credible when delivered by a product reviewer/blogger than an established celebrity.

Young women see Youtubers & Instagrammers more as "real" people, particularly because they have access to their personal life vlogs or their Instagram stories that show the not so glossy and picture perfect side of their lives. Vloggers display this sense of an authentic self through their straight-to-camera communication, making vlogging the self-realizing result of their individual creative efforts (Jerslev, 2016).

Traditional Celebrities

Celebrities find it way more hard to be relatable due to their fame and fortune. The difference between the Kardashians, for example, and these YouTubers is that the former are exploiting their celebrity to launch video channels, whereas the latter are using video channels to become celebrities (Berryman & Kavka, 2017).

AUTHENTICITY

Social mediacelebrities

According to Marwick, authenticity as a community-defined social construct, is a fluctuating set of affective relations between individuals, audiences, and commodities' (2013, 7). Moreover, influencers in a bid to avoid being seen as dishonest, disclose if they are being paid for a review and by posting affiliate links below one's videos. Although being authentic is often seen in opposition to self-branding and commercialization, it is relevant to note that self-promoting and online fame – together with the social and economic perks this entails – can also be seen as deserved and subsequently legitimized by the community (García-Rapp 2017).

Traditional Celebrities

Traditional celebrities, on the other hand, are less inclined to feel held to ethical standards of endorsing a product only if they genuinely believe in it. This is majorly due to the disconnect with their audience. Referring to the Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) study, users expressed that celebrity endorsements are more superficial, and it appeared to them that some products were overpriced and beyond their budgets.

Source Credibility Theory

Before the advent of social media, media credibility was studied taking into consideration its three stages: the credibility of the source, of the message and of the channel that carries it. Previous studies discuss the credibility of sources using a variety of elements: trustworthiness and expertise on the one hand (Wilson and Sherrell, 1993) and dynamism, composure, and sociability on the other hand (Gass and Seiter, 1999, Perloff 1993).

Source credibility refers to how the consumers perceive the source of information.

In line with the Advertising Value Model, Lou & Yuan (2018) have developed the Factors in Social Media Influencer Value Model (SMIV). This model discusses how source credibility affects consumer behaviour and redefines the trust concept in the influencer context. It states the influence of credibility on perceived trust, brand awareness and also the purchase intention. More specifically, three of the credibility elements: trustworthiness, similarity, and attractiveness proved to have positive effects on perceived trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention.

Social Media Influencers in the Diffusion of Innovations Framework Rogers (2003) classified consumers in five adopter categories (Rogers 2003): Innovators, early adopters, early majority adopters, late majority adopters and laggards. Adopter categories form a bell-shaped curve in which innovators represent the most inclined to innovations whereas laggards represent the least (Figure 1). Early adopters of an innovation are influential to spread both negative and positive ideas to others. Innovators, which just form the 2.5% of consumers, are the ones who are eager to try new ideas and they always desire the risky. Innovators have a gatekeeping role within the diffusion process while they launch the new idea in the social system. Their role in the flow of new ideas into a social system is very critical and effective. Early adopters are defined as the individual to check with before using a new idea. Early majority represents consumers who adopt new ideas just before the average members of the social system. Early majorities do not take as many risks as innovators or early adopters, they evaluate their decisions more, and they are not the first ones to try out new things. Late majority constitutes the sceptical ones. Finally, laggards represent the traditionals who are the latest to adopt innovations.

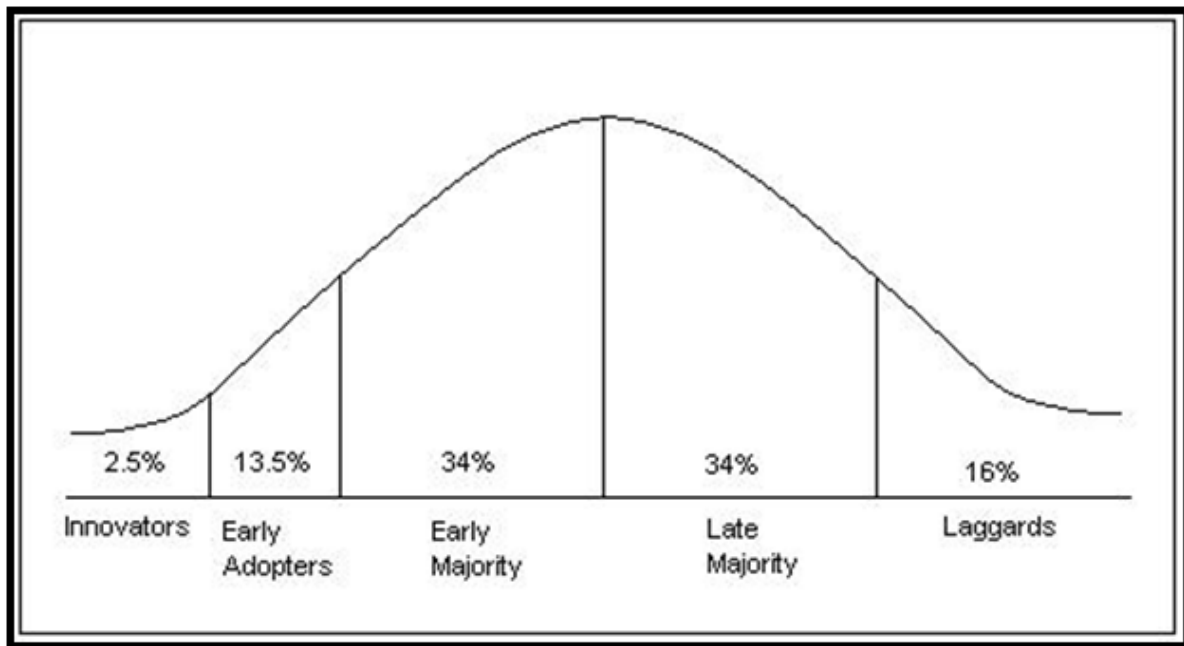


Figure: Adopter categorization on the basis of innovativeness Source: Rogers, E. M. (2003). Diffusion of Innovations.

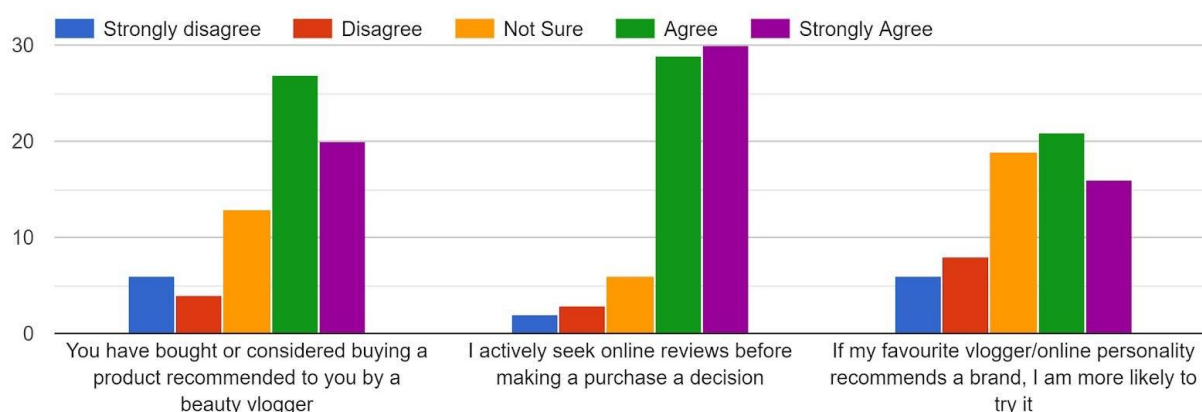
Persuasion Knowledge Model

The “Persuasion Knowledge Model” (PKM) postulates that consumers develop knowledge about persuasion and use this knowledge to “cope” with persuasion episodes (Friestad and Wright 1994). Persuasion knowledge refers to how consumers perceive persuasion tactics which includes their beliefs about the motives and strategies of marketers; effectiveness and appropriateness of persuasion tactics; psychological mediators of tactic effectiveness; and how they cope with these persuasion attempts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the research is to study the power of influence of beauty bloggers in comparison to traditional celebrities. The study also tries to understand the authenticity and relatability of beauty bloggers compared to the traditional celebrities, the female consumers are more likely to find the beauty vloggers more credible. The Quantitative research method was used to conduct this study. A survey was conducted with 70 respondents from Mumbai between the ages of 17 to 35 from both the genders (Male and Female) who are exposed to celebrity endorsements and consume content created by YouTube Beauty Creators.

7. How much do you agree with the following statements?



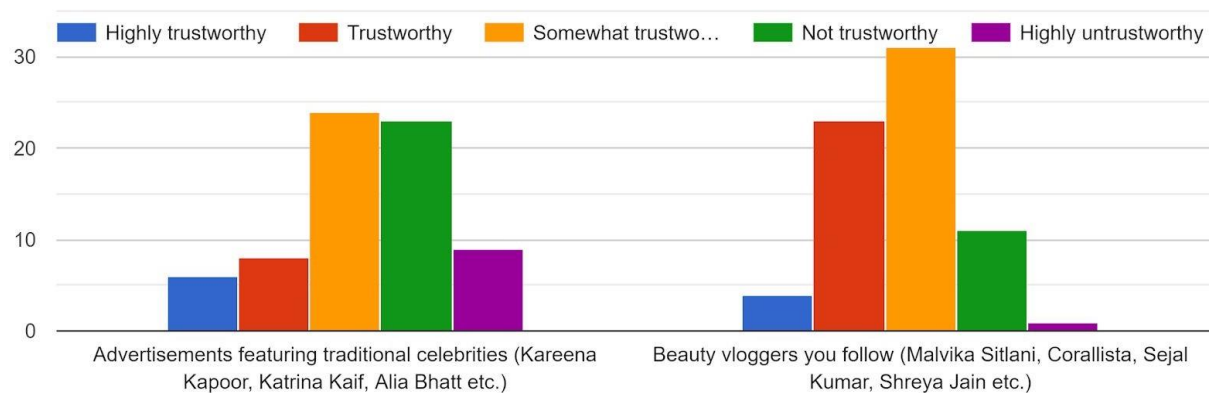
You have bought or considered buying a product recommended to you by a beauty vlogger - 27 respondents chose Agree, followed by 20 who went with Strongly Agree, 13 respondents selecting Not Sure, followed by 6 & 4 who chose Strongly Disagree and Disagree respectively.

I actively seek online reviews before making a purchase decision - 30 respondents chose Strongly Agree, followed by 29 who chose Agree, 6 chose Not Sure, followed by 3 who chose Disagree and lastly, 2 who chose Strongly Disagree.

If my favourite vlogger/online personality recommends a brand, I am more likely to try it - 21 respondents selected Agree, followed by 19 who selected Not Sure, 16 who chose Strongly Agree, followed by 8 & 6 who chose Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively.

The results to this question prove **H2**: Beauty vloggers score high on the authenticity and relatability scale as compared to traditional celebrities.; and **H4**: Female consumers find beauty vloggers credible.

8. Please rate the trustworthiness of the options below when showing or talking about (their) products.

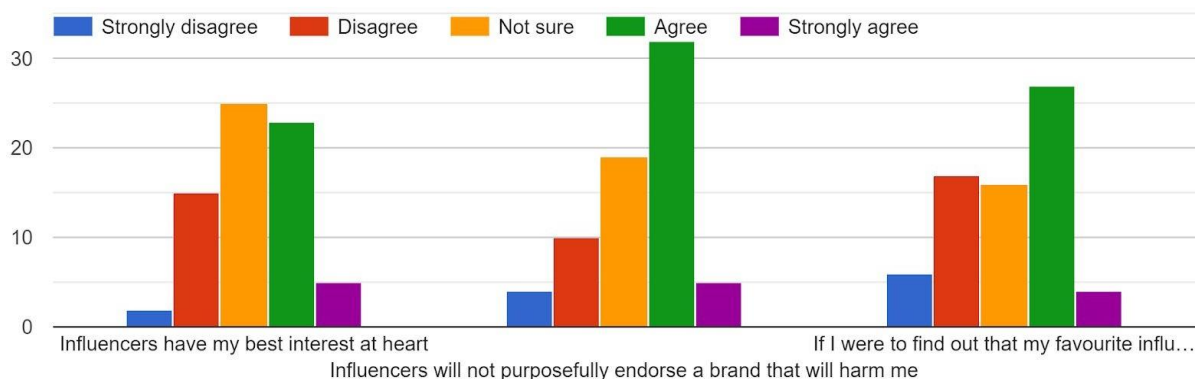


Advertisements featuring traditional celebrities (Kareena Kapoor, Katrina Kaif, Alia Bhatt etc.) - 24 respondents chose Somewhat Trustworthy, followed by 23 who chose Not Trustworthy, 9 deemed them Highly Untrustworthy, followed by 8 and 6 who chose Trustworthy and Highly Trustworthy respectively.

Beauty vloggers you follow (Malvika Sitlani, Corallista, Sejal Kumar, Shreya Jain etc.) - 31 respondents chose Somewhat Trustworthy, followed by 23 who selected Trustworthy, 11 who chose Not Trustworthy, and 4 & 1 who chose Highly Trustworthy and Highly Untrustworthy respectively.

The results to this question prove **H1**: Beauty vloggers are more influential as compared to traditional celebrities.; and **H4**: Female consumers find beauty vloggers credible.

9. What is your perception of the following?



Influencers have my best interests at heart – 25 respondents voted Not Sure, 23 chose Agree, 15 chose Disagree, 5 picked Strongly Agree and lastly, 2 picked Strongly Disagree.

Influencers will not purposefully endorse a brand that will harm me – 32 respondents chose Agree, 19 picked Not Sure, followed by 10 who selected Disagree, 5 who chose Strongly Agree and finally, 4 respondents who selected Strongly Disagree.

If I were to find out my favourite influencer was paid for their endorsement, it would not negatively impact my perception of their credibility – 27 respondents voted for Agree, followed by 17 who selected Disagree, 16 who voted for Not Sure, followed by 6 who chose Strongly Disagree and lastly, 4 who selected Strongly Agree.

The combined results of **A)** and **B)** prove **H4**: Female consumers find beauty vloggers credible. The respondents trust that beauty vloggers have their best interests at heart and will not promote a brand or product that might have the potential to harm their followers.

The results to **C)** surprisingly, do not prove **H3**: Persuasion knowledge is negatively related to consumer responses in case of influencer advertising. Contrary to the explanation above, the respondents found honesty in influencers disclosing a product/brand as sponsored and listing it simply and clearly as an endorsement.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that influencers are deemed more trustworthy than celebrities, and that people feel more similar to influencers and identify more with them than celebrities. These processes, in turn, affect advertising effectiveness. Therefore, a first implication of the study is that influencers may be more effective product endorsers than traditional celebrities and a practical recommendation is therefore to continue to use influencer endorsers in marketing campaigns.

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