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Abstract

Beauty social media influencers are increasingly shaping consumers' beauty product preferences, particularly those of Generation Y female consumers. YouTube beauty vloggers are beauty 'gurus' who have built a sizable follower base on the YouTube platform, where they disseminate beauty-related content in the form of makeup and skincare tutorials, beauty product reviews and beauty product recommendations. These vlogs disrupt the beauty product industry, notably shaping the brand preferences of Generation Y females. Despite the growing academic focus on social media influencer marketing, there is a recognised need for more research exploring YouTube vlogs, particularly in the context of beauty products and female Generation Y consumers, and in the setting of the South African market. To overcome this constraint in scholarly literature, this study sought to evaluate a modified rendition of the marketing communication value model proposed by Ducoffe (1996) as a measure of Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube within the context of South Africa. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from a single cross-sectional sample of 340 Generation Y female consumers. Data analysis included exploratory principle component analysis, collinearity diagnostics, confirmatory factor analysis, validity and reliability tests, and model fit assessment. The measurement model outlined for confirmatory factor analysis contained the latent factors of informativeness, entertainment, credibility and perceived value. The statistical findings suggest that the perception of beauty vlogs on YouTube by female consumers from Generation Y follows a four-factor model. This model is deemed valid, reliable, and demonstrates a good fit, with no concerns of multi-collinearity. This measurement model, validated through empirical evidence, furnishes academics and practitioners in beauty product marketing with a tool for determining Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube.

***Keywords**: Marketing communication value model, beauty vlogs, Generation Y females, model validation, South Africa.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Y, encompassing individuals born from 1986 to 2005 (Markert, 2004), is a key demographic for the beauty industry due to not only their focus on physical appearance but also their considerable purchasing power (Deslandes, 2017). Beauty social media influencers are increasingly shaping consumers' beauty product preferences (InterGest South Africa, 2023), particularly those of Generation Y consumers. This generational cohort devotes substantial time to social media (Wong, 2023), displaying a higher trust in influencer product endorsements than in traditional marketing channels (Wong, 2023; Wilberg, 2018), which suggests that a social media influencer marketing strategy is a powerful strategy for engaging with these consumers. While beauty social media influencers operate across a range of digital platforms, YouTube and Instagram are the most popular platforms for beauty influencer content (Geyser, 2024). YouTube beauty vloggers, particularly influential among Generation Y, establish an authentic connection between beauty brands and this lucrative market segment (Scianna, 2021; Carnett, 2018).

While beauty vlogs cater to diverse audiences, indications suggest that Generation Y females, in particular, form a predominant consumer base (Kolmar, 2023; Hassan *et al.*, 2021). These vlogs disrupt the beauty product industry, notably shaping the brand preferences of Generation Y females (Creswell, 2017). Despite the growing academic focus on social media influencer marketing, there is a recognised need for more research exploring YouTube vlogs, particularly in the context of beauty products and female Generation Y consumers (Miranda *et al*., 2021; Hassan *et al*., 2021), and in the setting of the South African market.

Consequently, this paper reports on the findings of a study aimed at assessing a modified rendition of the marketing communication value model proposed by Ducoffe (1996) as a measure of Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube within the context of South Africa.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Lou and Yuan (2019), social media influencers are individuals recognised as opinion leaders, leveraging personal branding to establish themselves as experts in particular domains and garnering a substantial following across various social media platforms. They create consumption-related content, such as product reviews within a specific niche or related niche product categories. YouTube beauty vloggers are beauty 'gurus' who have built a sizable follower base on the YouTube platform where they disseminate beauty-related content in the form of makeup and skincare tutorials, beauty product reviews and beauty product recommendations (Ceci, 2023). These YouTube beauty vlogs represent a video-oriented manifestation of word-of-mouth communication, encompassing the dissemination of beauty-related information, viewpoints, expertise and endorsements from beauty influencers to their audience of YouTube channel subscribers (Hassan *et al*., 2021).

While beauty-related vlogs, alongside fashion vlogs, are among the most popular content on YouTube (Ceci, 2023), there is still a lack of understanding as to the factors that foster consumers' engagement with such content on this platform, as well as how such content influences their beauty product preferences (Santiago & Su, 2023). As per the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory, which aims to elucidate why people consume certain media and the satisfaction they derive from it (Katz *et al*., 1973), an individual's decision to interact with specific media and their extent of involvement with it are influenced by how well it fulfils their needs—essentially, their perceived value of that media (Rubin, 1993). This suggests that uncovering Generation Y females' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube is an important precursor to future studies directed at understanding their engagement with such vlogs and the influence such vlogs have on their beauty product preferences.

The Ducoffe (1996) marketing communication value model, which is derived from the U&G theory, serves as a potentially useful model for understanding Generation Y females' perceived value of YouTube beauty vlogs. This model, which has been applied in a number of settings, including explaining consumers' perceived value of Web-based advertiements (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett & Carr, 2001; Zha *et al.*, 2015), email-based advertisements (Chang *et al*., 2013), mobile-based advertisements (Tsang *et al.*, 2004; Kim & Han, 2014; Martins *et al*., 2019) and social media-based advertisements (Saxena & Khanna, 2013; Shareef *et al*., 2019), was selected as the theoretical framework of this study.

Ducoffe (1995) elucidates that the perceived value of consumption-associated communication entails an audience's subjective evaluation of the relative merit or usefulness of such communication, which he subjects is positively affected by their perceptions of the informative and entertaining value of the communication and negatively affected by the degree to which they perceive such communication to be irritating. The model's dimension of irritation was excluded from the current study as followers need to actively subscribe to a particular vloggers channel, which makes the construct of irritation irrelevant.

Expanding upon Ducoffe's (1996) research, Brackett and Carr (2001) introduced credibility as a factor influencing the advertising value model. Further investigations have verified credibility's significance in influencing how a target audience perceives the value of advertisements (Kim & Han, 2014; Zha *et al*., 2015; Martins et al., 2019), as well as online followers' assessment of the value of social media influencers' content (Ata *et al*., 2022).

Based on the literature examined, this research suggests that Generation Y female consumers' appraisal of beauty vlogs on YouTube conforms to a four-factor model, encompassing the latent variables of informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and perceptions of value.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive research design, with a single cross-sectional sampling approach.

3.1 Sampling and data collection

The population of interest to the study was defined as Generation Y female consumers residing in South Africa aged 18 to 37 years. A marketing research company gathered the required data from a panel sample using an online survey and employing convenience sampling to recruit respondents who matched the target population description.

The sample size was limited to 400 respondents, which exceeds the sample size appropriate for conducting structural equation modelling on structural models comprising seven or fewer factors (Hair *et al*., 2018).

3.2 Research instrument

The online questionnaire contained scaled-response items from previously validated published studies. Informativeness (seven items), entertainment (five items) and value (three items) of beauty vlogs were measured using items adapted from Ducoffe's (1996) marketing communication value scale. Credibility (five items) was measured using items adapted from Ohanian's (1990) trustworthiness scale.

The participants' reactions to the 20 scaled statements were recorded using a six-point Likert scale, spanning from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6).

3.3 Data analysis

Data collected from the online survey underwent analysis using SPSS Version 28 and AMOS. The statistical procedures comprised exploratory principal component analysis, Pearson's product-moment correlation for assessing nomological validity, collinearity diagnostics, confirmatory factor analysis employing the maximum likelihood method, internal-consistency and composite reliability examination, as well as evaluations of convergent and discriminant validity, and assessment of model fit.

Nomological validity necessitates significant correlation coefficients, aligning with the theoretical framework, among each pair of intended latent factors within a model (Hair *et al*., 2018). To ensure no significant multi-collinearity concerns in a proposed measurement model, tolerance values exceeding 0.10 and average variance inflation factors (VIF) below 10 are essential (Pallant, 2020).

In the confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model, a four-factor model was defined, where the initial loading on each of the four latent factors was set at 1.0. This configuration rendered an over-identified model, comprising 230 unique sample moments and 66 distinct parameters for estimation, yielding 164 degrees of freedom (df) based on a chi-square value of 445.672, with a probability level of 0.000.

Due to the susceptibility of the chi-square value to inflate with larger sample sizes (Byrne, 2010), alternative model fit measures were utilised for assessment. These included the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). Criteria for acceptable model fit involved CFI and TLI values surpassing 0.90 and an SRMR value below 0.08 (Malhotra, 2020).

Internal-consistency reliability and composite reliability (CR) necessitate Cronbach's alpha (α) and CR values equal to or greater than 0.70 (*Hair et al.*, 2018). Convergent validity necessitates latent factor loading estimates and average variance extracted (AVE) values reaching 0.50 or higher. Discriminant validity, in turn, necessitates the squared-root of each of the AVE values (√AVE) to equal or exceed their relevant correlation values (Malhotra, 2020). The statistical significance level was determined at $p \leq 0.01$ consistently.

4. RESULTS

The data collection process resulted in 340 fully-completed questionnaires out of the 400 distributed, indicating an 85 percent rate of response. The sample included representatives from each of South Africa's nine provinces. Of South Africa's 11 official language groups, eight were represented with six respondents indicating their home language as something besides these 11 languages. Of the 20 age categories specified, only three were not represented in the sample, namely those aged 23, 36 and 37 years.

As a point of departure, an exploratory principal component analysis, employing varimax rotation, was conducted to examine whether there were any items exhibiting cross-loading or items that loaded on the wrong component. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted first. These tests yielded favourable outcomes, with a KMO value exceeding 0.6 (KMO = 0.947) and a significant Bartlett test result (chi-square=5366.752; df=190; p=0.000<0.01) (Pallant, 2020). The rotated component matrix is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Rotated component matrix

Items	C1	C2	C3	C4	Communalities
B1	.661				.540
B2	.747				.716
B3	.769				.730
B4	.756				.661
B5	.654				.551
B6	.707				.624

B7	.571				.637
B8			.819		.787
B9			.836		.835
B10			.796		.820
B11			.814		.829
B12			.637		.766
B13				.694	.756
B14				.786	.872
B15				.704	.790
C1		.685			.664
C2		.864			.818
C3		.855			.809
C4		.817			.780
C5		.788			.801
Percentage of variance	52.5	9.3	7.6	4.5	

As demonstrated in Table 1, each item loaded onto its designated component, consistent with the existing literature. The four components extracted explained 73.9 percent of the total variance. These components corresponded effectively with the designated components, exhibiting loadings that were both statistically and practically significant, surpassing 0.50. Moreover, all communalities exceeded 0.50, suggesting that a substantial portion of the variance in each item was captured by the component solution (Hair *et al*., 2018).

The confirmatory factor analysis was based on a specified measurement model indicating that the perceived value of beauty vlogs among Generation Y female consumers conforms to a four-factor structure, comprising the latent variables of informativeness, entertainment, credibility and value.

Before running the confirmatory factor analysis, a matrix of Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients was generated to appraise nomological validity, along with collinearity diagnostics to identify any potential issues of multi-collinearity. The resulting correlation coefficients, tolerance values and VIF values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation matrix and collinearity diagnostic results

	F1	**F2**	**F3**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
Informativeness (F1)				.445	2.248
Entertainment (F2)	.643*			.457	2.189
Credibility (F3)	.590*	.566*		.551	1.814
Value (F4)	.692*	.691*	.618*	.389	2.574
*$p \leq 0.01$					

The correlation coefficients presented in Table 2 demonstrate statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$) positive relationships among all pairs of latent factors intended for incorporation into the measurement model, thereby suggesting the model's nomological validity. The calculated tolerance values ranged from 0.389 to 0.551, and the average VIF was 2.2063, indicating the absence of significant multi-collinearity concerns.

A confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model was subsequently conducted utilising AMOS. Table 3 presents the derived estimates for the measurement model, comprising standardised loading estimates, squared multiple correlation estimates (R^2), alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) and the square root of AVE (√AVE) values. In addition, the correlation coefficients are provided.

Table 3: Estimates for measurement model

Latent factors	**Standardised loading estimates**	**R^2**	***a***	**CR**	**AVE**	**√AVE**
Informativeness (F1)	.676	.457	.89	.89	.56	.75
	.824	.679				

	.814	.663				
	.749	.561				
	.655	.429				
	.727	.529				
	.758	.575				
Entertainment (F2)	.813	.661	.93	.93	.74	.86
	.874	.764				
	.888	.789				
	.889	.790				
	.838	.703				
Credibility (F3)	.762	.581	.92	.93	.71	.84
	.866	.749				
	.858	.736				
	.853	.727				
	.875	.765				
Value (F4)	.813	.661	.88	.89	.73	.85
	.900	.810				
	.844	.712				
Correlations	F1↔F2: .696	F1↔F3: .625	F1↔F4: .750	F2↔F3: .589	F2↔F4: .746	F3↔F4: .655

The values presented in Table 3 for the measurement model point to all Cronbach's alpha and CR values surpassing 0.70, signifying internal-consistency and composite reliability. Additionally, the standardised loading estimates, along with the AVE values for each of the four latent factors, surpass 0.50. This, coupled with CR values surpassing 0.70, suggests that these factors demonstrate convergent validity.

In addition, as the √AVE value for each of the factors equal or exceed their corresponding correlation values, there is also discriminant validity.

Moreover, all calculated model fit indices indicate a favourable fit, with a CFI of 0.947, a TLI of 0.938, and an SRMR of 0.052. Drawing from the aforementioned results, this study asserts that the perceived value of beauty vlogs among Generation Y female consumers conforms to a four-factor measurement model, demonstrating critical aspects of assessment indicative of construct validity, reliability, and satisfactory model fit.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper elucidated the outcomes of an investigation aimed at evaluating a modified rendition of Ducoffe's (1996) marketing communication value model as an assessment tool for gauging the perceived value of beauty vlogs among Generation Y female consumers within the South African context. The results infer that Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube is a four-factor model that includes informativeness, entertainment, credibility and perceived value. The outcomes of the confirmatory factor analysis validate a measurement model demonstrating internal consistency and composite reliability, as well as nomological, convergent, and discriminant validity, along with favourable model fit. This model represents the starting point for understanding the persuasiveness of beauty vlogs amongst Generation Y female consumers.

Further investigation is warranted to elucidate the interplay among these four factors and determine whether the informativeness, entertainment and credibility inherent in beauty vlogs contribute to female Generation Y consumers' perceived value of such vlogs.

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