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Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs: path analysis

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Abstract

The beauty sector is widely recognised for being among the earliest adopters of social media marketing and for acknowledging the potential of social media influencers. A beauty vlogger refers to an individual who has attracted a significant number of followers on a video-based social media platform. Although academic literature is increasingly focusing on social media influencer marketing, there is demand for additional research, particularly on YouTube vlogs, regarding their impact on beauty product consumption among Generation Y female consumers. The goal of this study was to identify the elements that contribute to Generation Y female consumers' assessment of the perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube. A structured electronic questionnaire was used to gather data from a sample of 340 females, 18 years of age or older, living in South Africa. The results infer that Generation Y female consumers perceive beauty vlogs on YouTube as informative, entertaining, credible and of value. Path analysis revealed that beauty vlog informativeness, entertainment value and credibility explain 69% of the variance in Generation Y females' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube. The findings underscore the relevance of beauty product marketers collaborating with beauty product influencers on YouTube when targeting Generation Y female consumers.

Keywords: *Generation Y female consumers, marketing communication value model, beauty vlogs, South Africa.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the beauty sector, encompassing skincare, fragrances, cosmetics and haircare items, was valued at approximately 430 billion USD in 2022, with projections suggesting it will climb to 580 billion USD by 2027 (Amed *et al.*, 2023). The beauty sector is widely recognised for being among the earliest adopters of social media marketing and for acknowledging the potential of social media influencers (Schwarz, 2022).

Social media, denoting various online communication channels utilised by individuals to establish networks and communities for sharing information and digital content (Appel *et al.*, 2020), has seamlessly integrated into people's everyday existence (Fakhreddin & Foroudi, 2022). According to Petrosyan (2024), there were an estimated 5.04 billion social media users globally at the start of 2024, which is 62.3 percent of the world's population.

For consumers, these social media channels have emerged as significant channels for accessing consumption-related information, including word-of-mouth communication and product reviews drawn from first-hand experiences across various product and service categories (Appel *et al.*, 2020). This, in turn, has given rise to the phenomenon of social media influencers. A social media influencer is an individual perceived as possessing knowledge, expertise or aspirational value within a specific niche product or service domain, who has attracted a significant number of followers and who wields an influence on the consumption behaviour of those followers on social media channels (Geyser, 2023). Beauty product and service marketers are increasingly turning to such influencers to engage with their target markets, particularly beauty vloggers (Kolmar, 2023; Newton, 2023). A beauty vlogger refers to an individual who has attracted a noteworthy number of subscribers on a video-based social media platform such as YouTube due to their aspirational value and their perceived beauty knowledge and expertise, and who exerts an influence on those followers' beauty product and service attitudes and behaviour (Chen & Dermawan, 2020).

Although academic literature is increasingly focusing on social media influencer marketing, there is a demand for additional research on YouTube vlogs, especially regarding their impact on the beauty product consumption among Generation Y female consumers, as highlighted by Miranda *et al.* (2021) and Hassan *et al.* (2021).

In light of this, the goal of this study was to identify the elements that impact on Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube. Specifically, the study focused on applying a modified rendition of the Ducoffe (1996) marketing communication value theory to test the influence of beauty vlog informativeness, entertainment and credibility on Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of such vlogs on

YouTube.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Founded on the Uses and Gratification theory (Katz *et al.*, 1973), the marketing communication value theory seeks to explain why people consume marketing content in the digital environment. Originally, the theory was designed to measure consumers' perceived value of advertisements on the Web (Ducoffe, 1996). This theory has since offered valuable insights into explaining consumers' perceptions of the value of user-generated consumption-related communication (Abbasi *et al.*, 2023; Saima, & Khan, 2020), as well as formal organisation-generated marketing communication (Dwinanda *et al.*, 2022; Arya & Kerti, 2020) across a variety of channels, including the Web channel (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett & Carr, 2001; Zha *et al.*, 2015), the email channel (Chang *et al.*, 2013), the mobile channel (Tsang *et al.*, 2004; Kim & Han, 2014; Martins *et al.*, 2019) and social media channels (Saxena & Khanna, 2013; Shareef *et al.*, 2019).

Ducoffe (1996) posits that the perceived value of marketing communication messages, which he describes as a target audience's perception of the overall worth of the marketing communication message to them, is fundamental to predicting an audiences' attitude towards marketing communication messages in general, as well as their attitude towards the marketing communication channel. He adds that this perceived value may also predict their attitudes towards individual marketing communication messages on specific marketing communication channels, as well as attitudes towards the brands showcased within those messages. This concept of marketing communication value can be extended to include individuals' perceptions of the benefits or worth of word-of-mouth consumption-related messages received from informal sources, including influencers on social media sites (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

In the original Web advertising value model, Ducoffe (1996) empirically determined that the informativeness (the relevance, timeliness and completeness of information supplied) and entertainment value (the enjoyment gleaned from exposure to the message) of Web advertisements were positive predictors of their perceived value, while the intrusive nature of such advertisement created irritation, which negatively affected this perceived value.

Since individuals purposively select to subscribe to and watch specific beauty vlog channels on YouTube, the concept of irritation is not relevant to the current study and was replaced with the construct of credibility, which is a more meaningful predictor in the case of user-generated digital content (Chen & Dermawan, 2020).

Aligned with the marketing communication value model, this research posits that the perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube among Generation Y female consumers is contingent upon their perception of these vlogs as informative, entertaining and credible. Consequently, the study formulated the following hypotheses:

H_{a1}: The informative nature of beauty vlogs positively affects the perceived value of these vlogs among Generation Y female consumers.

H_{a2}: The entertainment factor of beauty vlogs positively affects the perceived value of these vlogs among Generation Y female consumers.

H_{a3}: The credibility of beauty vlogs positively affects the perceived value of these vlogs among Generation Y female consumers.

Visually, this hypothesised mode is illustrated in Figure 1.

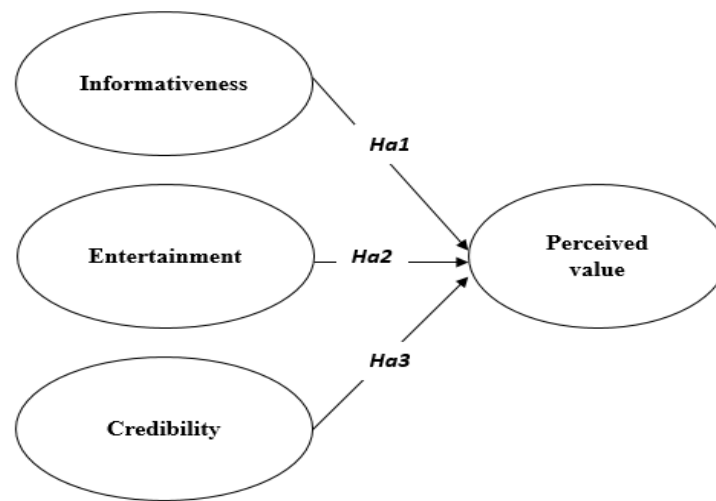


Figure 1: Hypothesised model

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adhered to the descriptive research design, and applying a single cross-sectional sampling approach.

3.1 Sampling and data collection

The targeted population for this research was females 18 years of age or older, living in South Africa, identified as belonging to Generation Y (individuals born from 1986 to 2005) (Markert, 2004). The services of a marketing research company were employed to gather data from a panel sample. The research company hosted an online survey and employed convenience sampling to recruit respondents who fitted the target population description.

Owing to cost restraints, the sample size was limited to 400 respondents. The selected sample size is suitable for conducting structural equation modelling given that, according to Hair *et al.* (2018), structural models with seven or fewer latent factors require a minimum sample size of 300.

3.2 Research instrument

A structured electronic questionnaire was developed to collect the necessary data during the online survey. The questionnaire encompassed an introductory letter detailing the purpose of the study and providing assurances of respondents' anonymity, together with questions designed to gather certain demographic information. The questionnaire also contained scaled-response items from previously validated published scales. The informativeness (seven items), entertainment (five items) and value of beauty vlogs on YouTube were measured using items adapted from Ducoffe's (1996) web advertising value scale. The credibility (five items) of such vlogs was measured using items adapted from Ohanian's (1990) trustworthiness scale.

Responses to all items with scaled-response categories were quantified using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 6 (indicating strong agreement).

3.3 Data analysis

The data underwent analysis using SPSS and AMOS, Versions 28, employing a range of statistical methods including frequencies and percentages, descriptive statistics, a one-sample t-test and regression path analysis.

The measurement model that was validated beforehand demonstrated reliability, as indicated by

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values exceeding 0.70. The nomological validity of this model was confirmed by the statistically significant associations observed between each pair of latent factors in the model. Additionally, convergent validity was supported by standardised loading estimates along with the average variance extracted (AVE) values surpassing 0.50. Discriminant validity was also established, with the square root of AVE ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$) values equal to or greater than their respective correlation coefficients. The measurement model also demonstrated satisfactory model fit (Bevan-Dye, 2024). The hypothesised structural model employed in this statistical analysis is derived from this validated model and involved the same respondent sample.

4. RESULTS

Data collection yielded 375 questionnaires. Of these, 35 were discarded as they had more than 10 percent of their responses missing. This resulted 340 complete questionnaires and, given the target sample size of 400, a response rate of 85 percent. Whilst South Africa's nine provinces are each represented in the sample, only eight of the country's 11 official languages is represented and the sample did not include anyone aged 23, 36 or 37 years old. Of the respondents, six indicated their home language as something other than the country's 11 official languages.

To assess the perception of Generation Y female consumers regarding the informativeness, entertainment value, credibility and overall value of beauty vlogs, descriptive statistics were calculated, alongside a one-sample t-test with an anticipated mean of 3.5. Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, t-values and associated *p*-values for the four latent factors.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, t-values and *p*-values

| Latent factors | Means | Standard deviations | t-values | <i>p</i> -values |
|--|-------|---------------------|----------|------------------|
| Informativeness (F1) | 4.862 | .6999 | 35.873 | .000 |
| Entertainment (F2) | 5.085 | .7246 | 40.344 | .000 |
| Credibility (F3) | 4.627 | .8108 | 25.631 | .000 |
| Value (F4) | 4.859 | .8745 | 28.653 | .000 |
| Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.01$ | | | | |

The means of the responses collected on the six-point Likert-type scale all exhibited statistical significance ($p \leq 0.01$). Among them, the highest means were observed for entertainment (mean = 5.085), informativeness (mean = 4.862) and value (mean = 4.859). A marginally weaker but still statistically significant mean score was registered for credibility (mean = 4.627). These findings indicate that Generation Y female consumers perceive beauty vlogs as informative, entertaining, credible and valuable. In accordance with the literature reviewed, a structural model was formulated to examine the hypothesised paths that Generation Y female consumers' perception of the informativeness (H_{a1}), entertainment (H_{a2}) and credibility (H_{a3}) of beauty vlogs predicts their perceived value of such vlogs.

Table 3 provides a synopsis of the un-standardised and standardised regression coefficients, standard error estimates and *p*-values produced by AMOS for the structural model.

Table 3: Path estimates

| Hypothesised paths | Un-standardised β | Standardised β | SE | <i>p</i> | Result |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------|------|----------|----------|
| Ha1: Informativeness \rightarrow Value | .394 | .358 | .074 | .000 | Accepted |
| Ha2: Entertainment \rightarrow Value | .403 | .371 | .050 | .000 | Accepted |
| Ha3: Credibility \rightarrow Value | .195 | .213 | .067 | .000 | Accepted |

β : beta coefficient; SE: standardised error; *p*: two-tailed statistical significance

The findings presented in Table 3 reveal that all tested regression paths were positive and statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$). Hence, there is adequate evidence within the sample to support H_{a1} , H_{a2} and H_{a3} . The standardised regression estimates indicate that informativeness ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), entertainment ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$) and, to a lesser extent, credibility ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predict the perceived value of beauty vlogs among female consumers who are members of Generation Y.

These results from the regression path analysis are visually illustrated in Figure 2.

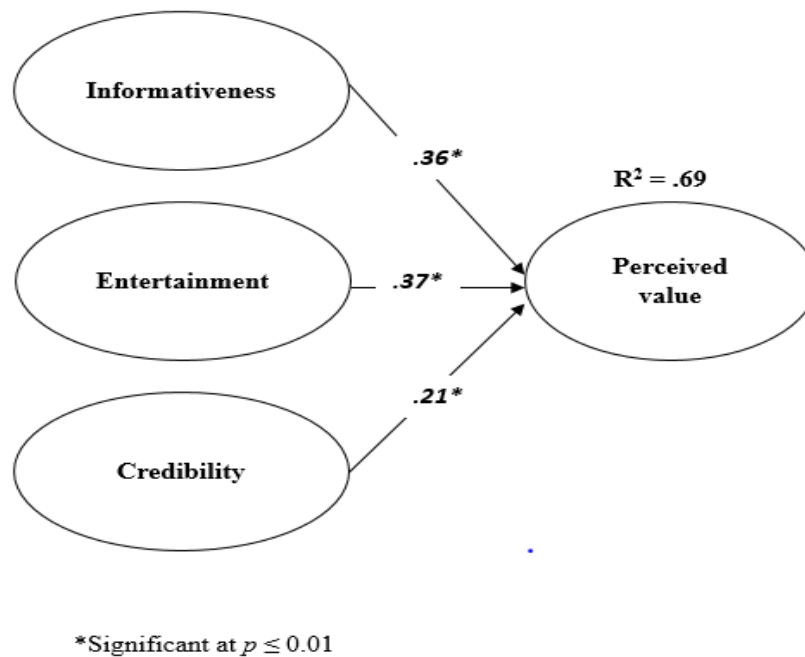


Figure 2: Structural model

As depicted in Figure 2, with a squared multiple correlation coefficient (SMC) of 0.685, informativeness, entertainment and credibility collectively account for 69 percent of the variance in Generation Y female consumers' perceived value of beauty vlogs. Regarding model fit indices, a standardised root mean square residual (0.0516) below 0.08, and Tucker-Lewis index (0.938) and comparative fit index (0.947) both exceeding 0.90 signify that the structural model demonstrated favourable model fit (Malhotra, 2020).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study in this paper sought to ascertain Generation Y female consumers' perceptions of the value of beauty vlogs on YouTube in the South African context. The study made use of an adapted version of the Ducoffe (1996) marketing communication value theory for this purpose. The statistical estimates returned in this study indicate that Generation Y female consumers in South Africa perceive beauty vlogs on YouTube as informative, entertaining and engaging, credible and valuable. Path analysis revealed that beauty vlog informativeness, entertainment value and credibility are all significant positive predators of the perceived value of beauty vlogs and explain 69 percent of the variance in Generation Y females' perceived value of beauty vlogs on YouTube. The research findings underscore the relevance of beauty product marketers collaborating with beauty product influencers on YouTube when trying to engage with Generation Y female consumers. In addition, the research findings emphasise the salience of beauty vloggers developing and presenting informative beauty product content in an entertaining manner and exercising a high degree of integrity in doing so.

To create informative, interesting and credible beauty vlog content, several key strategies should be employed. First, thorough research on beauty products, techniques and trends is crucial to ensure accurate information is provided. Incorporating personal experiences and honest reviews adds authenticity and relatability to the content. Utilising visual aids such as before-and-after shots, tutorials and product demonstrations enhances the viewer's understanding and engagement with the content. Additionally, citing reputable sources and experts within the beauty industry lends credibility to the content. Transparency about any sponsorships or affiliations maintains trust with the target audience. Engaging with viewers through comments, Q&A sessions, and interactive polls fosters a sense of community and encourages further learning. By combining these elements, beauty vloggers can produce content that is both informative, interesting and credible, catering to the diverse needs and interests of their Generation Y female audience.

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