

Influencer marketing's effect on Huda Beauty cosmetics customers' purchasing decisions: A comparison between the UK and Pakistan markets

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Abstract.

By comparing the markets in Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK), the study seeks to understand how influencer marketing (IM) affects Huda Beauty Cosmetics customers' purchasing decisions. There is presently a significant disconnect between beauty brands and consumers due to the constant changes in the industry and the general ignorance of the consumer base. Pakistani customers are less aware of the use of beauty goods than those in the UK, where IM is more common.

By highlighting the significance of IM and demonstrating how it affects the cosmetics sector in Pakistan and the UK, the study seeks to close this knowledge gap. The planned study is important for a larger population. Although the focus of this study is Huda Beauty, it has broad applications in the cosmetics sector. Because the study focuses on IM, a hot topic right now, and because so many firms can benefit from it, it has a bigger impact. IM, which was once described as word-of-mouth marketing, is a process that empowers an individual to influence a particular target market. People can be influenced by someone because of their fame, reputation, or level of knowledge.

IM is a modern strategy used by cosmetics businesses globally to improve social growth among consumers. Consumers alter their purchasing habits by depending on influencers or bloggers for recommendations because they consider these sources to be the most reliable sources of information before making any kind of purchase. The study's sample consisted of UK and Pakistani consumers of the Huda beauty cosmetic brand at random. 400 randomly selected respondents from the UK and Pakistan were given questionnaires; however, only 300 responded. Researchers used SPSS software to analyse all of the data they gathered from closed-ended questionnaires.

Keywords: Influencer marketing; Consumer buying behaviour; Huda beauty cosmetics; UK; Pakistan.

1. Introduction

IM has become more popular in the cosmetics sector, but some brands are still lagging because they place insufficient emphasis on it (Trivedi and Sama, 2020). IM has become increasingly important on a global scale since it influences consumer purchasing behaviour and helps to fortify the bond between the customer and the company (Trivedi and Sama, 2020).

There is a significant disconnect between companies and consumers due to the constant advancements in beauty goods and consumer ignorance. Pakistani customers are less aware of the use of beauty goods than those in the UK, where IM is more common (Ismail, 2018). By highlighting the significance of IM and demonstrating how it affects the cosmetics sector in Pakistan and the UK, the study seeks to close this knowledge gap. The UK's IM industry is valued at 12.57 pounds in 2022—certainly more than Pakistan's. Consumers often look to influencers' reviews and comments to determine the usefulness of a product or service. As a result, the brand's value has been declining and consumer purchasing behaviour has been negatively impacted by the lack of attention paid to IM (Ismail, 2018).

The contribution of this study has been broadening perspectives on the significance of IM in the cosmetics sector and its impact on consumer behaviour. The contrast between UK and Pakistani consumers when it comes to Huda beauty brand purchases is another way that the study advances knowledge. The study is important for a larger population. Although the focus of this study is Huda Beauty, it has broad applications in other sectors. Because the study focuses on IM, a hot topic right now, and because so many firms can benefit from it, it has a bigger impact. Therefore, by comparing the markets in Pakistan and the UK, the study seeks to understand how IM affects Huda Beauty Cosmetics customers' purchasing decisions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of IM

The transmission and development of advertising and marketing promotional messages through opinion leaders and other influential individuals—rather than through the brand—are known as IM. Influencers try to spread word of mouth by persuading others to purchase the product (Jin et al., 2019). IM, which was once described as word-of-mouth marketing, is a process that empowers an individual to influence a particular target market. A person's reputation, popularity, and level of competence can all have an impact on others (Jin et al., 2019). IM has become a popular strategy used by the cosmetics business globally to improve social growth among consumers (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

IM has been described as a cross between new and traditional marketing techniques. As such, it functions by utilising celebrity endorsements in conjunction with cutting-edge marketing strategies to attract the greatest amount of attention from consumers and improve their behaviour towards the brand. IM is a novel approach that big businesses are progressively implementing (Lou and Yuan, 2019). It has been described as the use of influencers or opinion leaders with large followings on their page to encourage good behaviour and attitudes associated with the business (Lou and Yuan, 2019). IM promotes brand recognition but does not encourage favourable consumer behaviour (Vrontis et al., 2021). Since small businesses can quickly gain traction through social media platform marketing, IM is also an important technique for them (Gilani et al., 2024; Gilani et al., 2025).

2.2 Growing Trend of IM

IM is becoming more and more popular, and this indicates that brands will likely spend billions of dollars on IM strategies shortly. On YouTube and Instagram, IM has a very high success rate. This will turn out to be a significant technological advancement for digital advertising as well (Levin, 2020). Marketing experts are working hard to implement IM as a strategy to maintain their business ahead of rivals to meet the demands of the modern world. Since consumers are increasingly more likely to use digital platforms, IM has been portrayed as a field guide for marketers in the digital era. Compared to traditional marketing, IM can help reach the majority of customers (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Campbell and Farrell (2020) indicate that IM is now an integral and necessary component of holistic marketing, not just a fad. To boost sales, visibility, profits, and customer interest, firms are now investing more in IM rather than taking a chance with traditional marketing techniques. IM is defined by the notion of trust (Trivedi and Sama, 2020; Tantry & Ali, 2020). Influencers are persons with a large following who are passionate about promoting products. The audience develops a sense of trust in influencers due to their fervent desire to promote and raise awareness of the product (Cobain, 2020).

Customers consider the influencer's perspective on the product or service when determining the worth of a product. People began to trust people instead of brands and marketers after that. Influencers are authentic because, if they appreciate their audience, they usually give candid feedback. This illustrates that the fundamental element required for influencer marketers to have a good impact on consumer behaviour is trust. It is challenging for influencers to regain a customer's trust once they have lost it in the marketing (Kramer, 2019, Hussein & Tantry, 2022; Iyer et al., 2024).

2.3 Role of IM on various social media platforms

There are numerous users of Instagram who follow influencers without any desire to observe their marketing but eventually influencing happens. Instagram users are free to follow or unfollow other users. Users can choose to push the follow button or not, for this reason. Instagram only gives users options when it comes to who they should follow through sponsored posts. People follow influencers who exhibit particular traits or qualities, and as a result, they are influenced to utilise and like things that they do.

This suggests that IM plays a significant role on social media networks. Brands leverage influencers' powerful platforms on social media to impact consumers' purchasing decisions (Mainali & Tantry, 2022). Mahal (2020) has noticed that social media platforms are also utilised for IM and have an impact. Through TikTok, IM companies also have an impact. One of the newest is TikTok, which has developed fantastic partnerships with advertising agencies to allow numerous businesses to leverage TikTok as a mega-influencer.

2.4 Role of IM on Purchase Intention Concerning the Cosmetics Industry

The concept of purchasing intention has typically been interpreted as the person's intention to buy the product (Wu and Chan, 2011; Golshan Sorour et al., 2024). Scholars in the cosmetic industry have applied the concept of IM and purchase intention, indicating that female consumers' online or in-store purchases of skincare and cosmetics are related to the industry's purchasing behaviour and intentions. According to Wu and Chan (2011), influencers' behaviour intentions on the use of products and commodities have a significant impact on the purchase intention of female consumers.

Eze et al. (2012) claim that there have been several modifications formed in various businesses in this modern period, particularly in the cosmetics industry. Cosmetic companies are looking for innovative approaches and methods to comprehend customer wants and deliver high levels of satisfaction in response to the growing demand and size of the tech-savvy consumer market. Female consumers are particularly interested in learning about cosmetics before purchasing because they are applied to the skin and might irritate or even cause cancer (Abraham et al., 2022; Tantry & Puri-Singh, 2017). Because this can help them increase customer loyalty, skincare and cosmetics firms are putting a lot of effort into IM to balance clients' favourable perceptions, attitudes, and concepts about the company.

The advent of the digital age has enhanced and increased transparency in the customer experience. Customers can now openly share their experiences and feedback online, and any consumer can check evaluations left by other customers. A single favourable review from a consumer can have a significant beneficial impact on a brand and increase the likelihood that the same client will buy the product again. Electronic word-of-mouth generated by IM is a primary driver of consumers' purchase intentions. Electronic word-of-mouth drives the maximum number of clients to make online purchases, which has a significant impact on business sales and can build market trust (Khan et al., 2023; Hassan et al., 2018). IM always has a genuine impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. As a result, companies must focus more on quality to get genuine favourable evaluations, as these reviews will help influencers promote their products to their networks through positive word-of-mouth (Tantry & Singh, 2016).

2.5 Studies for IM.

It is an undeniable reality that IM has become more and more popular globally, with brands of all sizes utilising it as a promotional strategy. From 1.7 billion dollars in 2016 to 9.7 billion dollars in 2020, the IM market has experienced significant growth. The increase in 2021 was approximately 13.8 billion dollars, and it is expected to continue growing in the years to come (Fig. 1). The rise is linked to the growing popularity of brief video formats on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube (Santora, 2022).



Fig. 1. IM Global Market Size
Source. Santora, 2022

Figure 1 illustrates how IM is being used globally and how it is expanding. China has also benefited from social commerce; in 2021, two Chinese streamers sold things for \$3 billion, surpassing Amazon's daily sales. There are a

lot of influencers in the United States. New York, Miami, Chicago, and Atlanta are among the other nations implementing this pattern (Santora 2022).

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey questionnaire with 400 randomly selected sample of Huda Beauty customers from the UK and Pakistan. SPSS was adopted to analyse the data (Jaafari et al., 2023). The Data Protection Act 2018 (UK Government, 2018) and Birmingham City University's (2024) research guidelines served as the foundation for ethical issues about participant permission, anonymity, and the confidentiality of research-related data.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Gender of Respondents

Out of 300 participants, men made up the majority in this concern (n = 177, 51.8%) compared to women (n = 119, 45.8%).

4.2 Educational Level of Respondents

In terms of education, the majority of participants (32.1%) had post-doctoral training, followed by master's (26.8%), bachelor's (23.2%), and doctoral (14.3%) degrees.

4.3 Work Experience of Respondents

Regarding work experience, the majority of participants (56%) had more than ten years of experience, followed by those with six to ten years of experience (39.9%).

4.4 Respondents Occupation in Current Organization

The responses from participants about their current organization's occupation are in Table 1. Managers made up the majority of participation, with managing directors, senior managers, and general managers following in order.

Table 1. Designation of participants in their employment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Assistant Manager	11	6.5	6.5	6.5
	Manager	45	26.8	26.8	33.3
	Senior manager	36	21.4	21.4	54.8
	General manager	32	19	19	73.8
	Managing director	44	26.2	26.2	100
	Total	300	100	100	

4.5 Reliability Statistics

Table 2 presents reliability statistics based on Cronbach Alpha to determine whether questionnaire items are trustworthy enough for additional examination. Cronbach Alpha comprises five distinct criteria in this regard. As a result, Cronbach Alpha was 785 for a reliable source, 0.807 for customer purchasing behaviour, 0.811 for an alluring source, and 0.798 for IM.

Table 2. Reliability statistics

Factor	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Credible source	5	0.785
Consumer buying behaviour	5	0.807
Appealing source	5	0.811

Influencer marketing	5	0.798
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4.6 Correlation Analysis

4.6.1 Correlation between Credible source and Consumer buying behaviour.

In terms of the Pearson correlation, the results show a statistically significant association ($r = .618$, $p = .000$) between consumer purchasing behaviour and reliable sources.

4.6.2 Correlation between IM and Consumer buying behaviour.

The Pearson correlation analysis between IM and consumer purchasing behaviour indicates a statistically significant association ($r = .808$, $p = .000$) between IM and consumer purchasing behaviour.

4.6.3 Correlation between Appealing Source and Consumer buying behaviour

The Pearson correlation indicates a statistically significant association ($r = .518$, $p = .000$) between appealing sources and customer purchase behaviour.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 The impact of IM on Pakistani and British consumers' decisions to buy Huda beauty products

The purpose of the research was to examine how companies and influencers can utilise their influence to affect the purchasing decisions of young people. "Studying the points of view of the brands that have marketing done through influencers and also the influencers who have direct connections with the consumers" was another goal of the research project. The primary goal of the thesis was to illustrate how influencers and companies use social media to influence individuals and have an impact on consumers' purchasing behaviours as well as their lifestyle and general behaviour. This was accomplished through the utilisation and analysis of the data gathered through interviews. Studying the three actors—including customers who are aware of this influence—was another goal of the investigation.

5.2 The influence of Huda Beauty Cosmetics on customers' purchasing decisions

According to this research, influencers create and share content with their followers on social media platforms. Social media apps like Instagram overcome geographical and temporal limitations to establish connections with people worldwide. Because influencers who stray from sharing videos and pictures of routine tasks grow in popularity, their audience grows. This includes the foods they eat, the clothes they wear, and their beauty routine for fashion and beauty influencers. Because the content published by the influencers aligns with their ideal lifestyles, the subscribers participate in this process. With influencers, they may form parasocial relationships. The followers think the influencers are reliable, gorgeous, and credible since they can relate to them.

As the influencers share aspects of their lives with their followers on social media, maintaining this contact with them fosters a great deal of trust and increases their "power of influence on the community." Brands are also aware of the impact influencers have on their following, particularly the younger ones. They work with influencers to market their products through collaborations. They can do away with the conventional forms of advertising using this strategy, which may discourage customers from making purchases. Because their audiences and contents differ, marketers target their clients after selecting the influencers they want to collaborate with. Additionally, they are aware that the trust that "exists between them and the followers while also ensuring that marketing advertising is better received by the consumers" is the foundation around which the influencer network operates.

5.3 How do influencers operate as reputable sources to drive positive consumer buying behaviour in the UK and Pakistan while purchasing Huda beauty products?

IM can have a variety of consequences on consumers, both positive and negative. Influencers have a big impact on followers' purchasing decisions. Influencers participate in the dissemination of content, including product recommendations, which boosts an organization's sales. Because they can relate to other followers, they are curious to learn more about their offerings. They attempt to buy comparable goods under specific brand names. As a result of their desire to draw inspiration from their favourite influencers, followers and influencers have an emotional and

cognitive connection. Although influencers set boundaries on their harmful effects, audiences are nonetheless exposed to a great variety of content that promotes the ideal of beauty. Many followers just draw inspiration from the influencers, but the remainder frequently compare and identify with them, which can lead to complex, annoyance, and mental or physical problems.

5.4 Implications.

The findings may have implications for consumers of Huda Beauty-related products looking to benefit from products in the beauty industry. The findings may inform IMs looking to better promote products in the beauty industry.

The findings may inform policymakers in the UK and Pakistan in better-developing policies related to the consumption of beauty products to ensure safety and fair trade. In terms of theoretical implications, the findings may inform future researchers in developing theories to investigate the impact of IM on the promotion of beauty products.

5.5 Recommendations

The authors recommend that Huda Beauty further explore innovative solutions to enhance their everyday operations like marketing, sales, communication, monetary transactions and coverage of events. Numerous authors have demonstrated the positive impact of innovative technologies on business survival and growth regardless of business sector and size (Al Jaghoub et al., 2024; Gernal et al., 2024; Moussa et al., 2024). The authors highly recommend Huda Beauty establishing partnerships with education institutions to better support innovation and recruitment (Yasin and Gilani, 2023; Yasin et al., 2023) which has been demonstrated to be significantly productive for higher education institutions. The authors also recommend Huda Beauty better adapt and change behavioural styles and characteristics to overcome challenges like the pandemic era which may aid the business in surviving and thriving; this has been demonstrated by studies in other industries and geographic contexts (Aseer et al., 2024; Krupicka et al., 2024; Sulthan et al., 2022). Additionally, it is recommended that Huda Beauty ensure adequate infrastructure to ensure the efficient running of their innovative operations whereas Gilani and Faccia (2022) and Gilani et al. (2022) highlight the importance of infrastructure for businesses in different areas to ensure their growth.

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