

The Role of Online Influencer's Characteristics in Attitude towards the Brand and Purchase Intention: A Case Study of L'Oréal

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to explore the relationship among the source characteristics of an online influencer, consumers' attitude and their purchase decision for L'Oréal brand. Two hundred and six Indian male and female respondents, aged between 18 and 40 years old and currently residing in Thailand, were asked to complete an online questionnaire survey. The results depicted that the respondents had a positive opinion on the source characteristics of the online influencer ($M = 3.69$), with likeability receiving the highest score ($M = 4.27$) and similarity receiving the lowest overall score ($M = 3.09$). Moreover, the respondents had a positive attitude towards the brand ($M = 4.10$) and were likely to purchase the products ($M = 3.90$). In regard to the relationship among the variables, the research results demonstrated that source characteristics is positively related with the respondents' attitude ($r = .551$) and their purchase intention on L'Oréal's products ($r = .512$).

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Introduction

Influencer marketing refers to promoting and marketing a brand's products or services using individuals who are considered to be opinion leaders, either due to their expertise, popularity, or reputation online (Haran, n.d.).

One prominent brand which uses influencer marketing is L'Oréal. L'Oréal is the world's largest personal care brand offering an extensive range of cosmetic products, hair products, skincare products, and perfumes (L'Oréal, 2021). The brand also uses a wide range of celebrities from different parts of the world, as well as popular online influencers to reach their potential consumers (Roderick, 2017). Kaushal, a blogger and vlogger, is one of L'Oréal Paris Beauty Squad's top online influencers. She constantly creates branded content for L'Oréal, and she is

featured in several of the brand's campaigns (Shaikh, 2017).

While choosing online influencers that would best represent the brand, L'Oréal considers various characteristics and features that these individuals have, as these characteristics can influence how the consumer reacts to the information. Thus, source characteristics play a key role in evaluating an online influencer (D. Biswas, A. Biswas, & Das, 2006; Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1983; Pornpitakpan, 2004).

There are two main dimensions of source characteristics. These include source credibility and source attractiveness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Source characteristics in general can have an influence on whether a piece of information is believed, how a consumer reacts to the

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information, their attitude, and their purchase intention.

Considering the increased popularity of influencer marketing by a brand like L'Oréal, the current study explores source characteristics of an online influencer and their relationship with consumer's attitude and purchase intention. This research can aid marketers and advertisers in picking online influencers and in creating more effective campaigns.

Source Characteristics

Influencer marketing is widely implemented by many brands. Influencer marketing focuses on using influencers such as online bloggers, YouTube vloggers and Instagram stars, to deliver brand messages to the target market (Smart Insights, 2017). Brands use influencers as a source of communication due to various reasons such as creating awareness, changing attitudes and for pushing consumers' intentions. Influencers present information and opinions from a consumer's point of view, to other consumers. In doing so, influencers are authentic and can reach their target audiences effectively (Mathew, 2018).

Sources have two main characteristics that help determine how effective they are in spreading information. The two characteristics include: source credibility and source attractiveness.

Source Credibility

Credibility is defined as the extent to which a source or the addressor is believable and the way in which the listener perceives the source (Adler & Rodman, 2000). It can have an influence on the effectiveness of the communication and usually is used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics (Ohanian, 1990). The source credibility theory was proposed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953). They proposed that receivers of a message are likely to be more persuaded when the source of the message is seen as credible. Previous studies have depicted that sources with high credibility bring about higher behavioral compliance among consumers or viewers compared to sources with low credibility (Ross, 1973; Woodside & Davenport, 1974).

Source credibility is made up of two factors: expertise and trustworthiness. Information from a credible source can influence consumers' beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors (Erdogan, 1999).

The first factor of source credibility is source expertise. In regard to communication, Hovland et al. (1953) described expertise as the degree or extent to which a communicator is thought to be a source of valid assertions and refers to the knowledge, experience or skills that

they have. In order for an endorser to truly have expertise, they should have knowledge or information that should relate to the product/brand that he or she endorses (Till & Busler, 1998). Source expertise is found to have a significant influence on information adoption (Cheung, 2008). Thus, influencers who are experts will be more persuasive and influential than non-experts (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998).

Source trustworthiness, in reference to celebrity or influencer endorsements, refers to the honesty, truthfulness and believability of an endorser" (Erdogan, 1999). In influencer marketing, brands try choosing influencers who are seen to be truthful, sincere, and dependable (Shimp, 1997). This is because when consumers evaluate the trustworthiness of their information sources, they tend to build their opinions on their perceptions of the source's motives for writing a product review (McCracken, 1989).

Thus, expertise and trustworthiness, which make up for a source's credibility play a key role in influencing consumer's attitudes and behavioral intentions. However, it is not the only factor that should be considered while choosing an online influencer to represent the brand (Erdogan, 1999).

Source Attractiveness

Source attractiveness, the second characteristic of sources, plays a crucial role in how a message is interpreted. Baker and Churchill (1977) explained that the consumer's beliefs and purchase intentions can be best altered through the use of physically attractive influencers. The study also revealed that attractive influencers generally create positive stereotypes and higher purchase intentions. There are several attractive influencers who endorse a brand or product out there; an example being the beauty influencer Kaushal. She is a digital influencer, blogger, vlogger, and one of L'Oréal Paris Beauty Squad's top online influencers. Kaushal is considered to be one of the leading vloggers around the globe and is looked up to for beauty advice (Shaikh, 2017).

Just like source credibility, even source attractiveness has two main dimensions under it. These include similarity and likeability. Source similarity is when consumers or even individuals tend to be more attracted to people who they have something in common with. McGuire (1985) described similarity as a supposed resemblance between the source of the information and the receiver of the message. The source and receiver of a message can be similar in various ways. It can describe the levels of individuals sharing similar demographics, lifestyle, interests, social status or even attitudes (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Erdogan (1999) believes that if an influencer has common interests and a similar

lifestyle to the consumer, a better cohesiveness can be created.

Source likeability is the second category that comes under source attractiveness. It is related to the fondness an individual or consumer may develop towards the physical or personal traits of the source of information (Kiecker & Cowles, 2001; Teng, Khong, Goh, & Chong, 2014). Moreover, the concept of likeability, explains that when consumers like an influencer, they tend to also like the brands that are associated with them, this is why influencer marketing works and affects the consumer's attitude towards a brand (G. Belch & M. Belch, 1994).

Likeability as a dimension is usually used to identify the interpersonal attraction that is presented between the source and the receiver of the message (Ohanian, 1990). Several studies in the past have deduced that source likeability is positively associated with a change in attitude (Chaikem, 1980; DeBono & Harnish, 1988).

Attitude

As per Chandon Jean-Louis (2011), attitude was defined as a set of beliefs, experiences or feelings that form a predisposition to act in a certain way towards an object. When consumers form attitudes towards a brand, a company or products, their attitude then affects their purchase intention and eventually their behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitude is expressed as the evaluation of a product, in either a favorable direction or an unfavorable one (Nguyen & Gizaw, 2014).

When discussing attitudes, people consider it in terms of two dimensions. These include valence and intensity. The valence of an attitude can be either an attraction or a repulsion felt towards an attitude object. It tends to be a direction of the attitude, described as either positive or negative, or satisfied or unsatisfied. Intensity, on the other hand, is the magnitude of ones' feelings towards an attitude object. The intensity of any attitude and influence how consumers behave towards the attitude object. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

There are various theories of attitude like the unidimensional view of attitude, the tripartite view of attitude and Fishbein's Theories of attitude. This study focuses on attitude from a unidimensional view.

Unidimensional View of Attitude

The unidimensional view of attitude treats attitude as a single affective construct and provides the basis for most of the measures of attitude. As per this approach to attitude, an

attitude consists of affect or the evaluation aspect only.

Fishbein (1967) argued that all techniques used to scale attitude have one common characteristic, which is the affect. The affect is considered to be the feeling, or whether a person is in favor of or against an object. It is usually inferred from an individual's assessment of their beliefs or the evaluative aspects of those beliefs. Beliefs, which are a part of an individual's cognition are viewed as antecedents, which cause a person to have a certain attitude about an attitude object. The intention to buy or behavior, which is considered to be the conative part of the theory, is considered to be the consequences of the attitude an individual has, which eventually causes the behavior to happen. Thus, overall, the unidimensional view of attitude represents a causal flow and portrays a cause-and-effect relationship.

Attitude and Its Influence on Purchase Intention

Several studies in the past have been conducted on various topics and in many fields to test if attitude has an influence on a consumer's purchase intention (Royo & Casamassima, 2011). Firstly, the intention to purchase or purchase intention, is the behavioral component of attitude. It is considered to be a consumer's tendency to respond in a certain manner towards an object or activity (Morwitz, 2014).

Royo and Casamassima (2011) explained in their research that several past researchers have analyzed the relationship between attitude and purchase intention and found that there is a positive relationship between the two, especially in the virtual community. In past research, the purchase intention is usually considered to be a dependent variable, while attitudes and another factor, whether they are subjective norms, source characteristics or the types of sources have been used as the independent variables (Verhallen & Pieters, 1984).

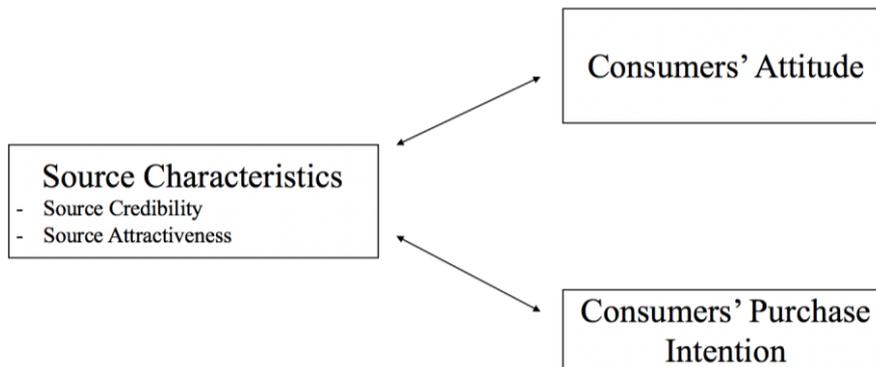
The concept of attitudes influencing consumer's purchase intention was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), as they believed and mentioned earlier that attitude is considered to be a psychological tendency that is expressed by assessing an object with some degree of favor or disfavor. Consumers have various attitudes towards objects or actions and these attitudes determine their intention to use a particular product (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Other studies from various theorists have found that attitude affects the purchase intention as well (Budiman, 2012; Jafar 2014; Mahesh, 2013).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature review, source characteristics have been identified to be closely related to the way consumers receive a

message; consumers can have any affective or behavioral response (Ohanian, 1990). As a result, this current research will explore the relationship between source characteristics, consumer attitude, and purchase intention. Figure 1 portrays the conceptual framework that will be utilized for this study.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Current Study



Based on the above research, the following hypotheses are posited for the current study:

H1: Source characteristics have a positive relationship with consumer's attitude.

H2: Source characteristics have a positive relationship with consumers' purchase intention.

Methodology

The current study aims to explore the relationship between source characteristics and consumers' attitude as well as their purchase intention for L'Oréal. The research uses a quantitative approach through an online questionnaire, to collect data. The questionnaire was designed to capture and understand the responses of consumers who are interested in the beauty sector, have had an interaction with L'Oréal, and follow online influencers who advocate the brand. The questionnaire consists of four parts which focus on the respondent's opinion of the source characteristics of the online influencer Kaushal, their attitude towards L'Oréal, their purchase intention for L'Oréal's products and their demographic features.

Sampling Method

The research employed a quantitative approach through an online survey. It studied a total of 227 respondents, out of which only 206 qualified for the study. The sample consisted of Indian men and women in Bangkok, within the age gap of 18-40 years. Indian respondents were chosen in this study, due to the fact that they shared a mutual cultural background with the influencer and thus they would have more chances of

knowing and following the online influencer. It was also imperative that the respondents had a purchasing interaction with a L'Oréal product in the past 6 months.

The influencer used in this research was Kaushal. She is a blogger, vlogger, and one of L'Oréal Paris Beauty Squad's top online influencers. She also constantly creates branded content for L'Oréal and is featured in several of the brand's campaigns (Shaikh, 2017).

The rationale behind purposely choosing this sample group was to ensure that the respondents knew and followed the online influencer Kaushal, and that they are the primary target group for L'Oréal and have a high purchase intention for the brand's products.

The sampling method that was used in this research, was based on non-probability, purposive sampling as the questionnaire was posted online on the researcher's Facebook page and distributed among the researcher's network.

Measurement of the Variables

This research measured three variables which include source characteristics, consumers' attitude, and consumers' purchase intention. Its aim was to study each variable in general and to study the relationship between these variables, in regard to L'Oréal.

The reliability and validity of the research instrument is vital while carrying out any kind of research. Thus, each variable in this research, was examined and measured based on measurement scales and items that were derived from existing previous research, to ensure reliability and validity. Moreover, before utilizing the measurement scales, the scales were checked and approved from the advisor of this research, in order to ensure content validity. A pre-test was conducted before the data collection, to ensure if people understood the questions and the content. In regards to the reliability of the scales, when data was being collected from the respondents, the scales were re-tested for reliability.

Source characteristics, the first variable, are the features of sources, which consist of two dimensions--source credibility and source attractiveness. The source credibility model was conceptualized by Ohanian (1990). Thus, source credibility which includes expertise and trustworthiness, was measured using an adapted version of Ohanian's (1990) celebrity endorsers scale. Both of these characteristics, expertise and trustworthiness, were measured using a five-item, five-point bipolar semantic differential scale. This scale was slightly adjusted from the original scale, which used a seven-point bipolar semantic differential scale. The respondents were asked to answer how they felt towards each characteristic, by depicting their level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 = Strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly disagree. In Ohanian's (1990) celebrity endorsers scale, the reliability was tested separately for both the characteristics. Moreover, since this scale had been utilized before, it recorded a high reliability of .93 (Ballentine & Au Yueng, 2015).

The second dimension, the source attractiveness model also consists of two characteristics, which include likeability and similarity. Source attractiveness was measured using two different measurement scales. Firstly, likeability was measured using an adapted version of Ohanian's (1990) celebrity endorsers scale. This scale uses a five-item, five-point bipolar semantic differential scale, where 5 = Strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly disagree. The scale was slightly adjusted from the original scale, which uses a seven-point bipolar semantic differential scale. The respondents were asked about how they felt about the influencer's characteristic. This scale has been used before and recorded a high reliability of .93 (Ballentine & Au Yueng, 2015).

Source similarity, on the other hand, was measured using a four-statement, five-point Likert Scale, developed by Chang (2011). Respondents were asked to answer the question based on their degree of agreement or disagreement towards the four source similarity statements. As this measurement scale has been utilized before, it recorded a high reliability of .89. The scale's range was: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

The next variable is attitude, which was looked at from a unidimensional view. Thus, it focuses on the feelings a consumer has towards L'Oréal. The measurement scale that was used to measure attitude was based on Bouhleb, Mzoughi, Ghachem, and Negra (2010) and Ohanian's (1990) studies. The respondent was asked about how they felt towards L'Oréal using a five-item, five-point bipolar semantic differential scale. This scale was slightly adjusted from the original one, which used a seven-point bipolar semantic differential scale. This scale of attitude carries a reliability of .97, providing evidence for acceptable reliability.

The last variable is purchase intention. Purchase intention was measured using a five-item scale, which was originally developed by Putrevu and Lord (1994) and Taylor and Baker (1994). The scale uses a five-statement, five-point Likert Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale has been slightly adjusted from the original scale which uses a seven-point Likert Scale. Moreover, statement number 2 in the scale is different from the other statements as it is negative. Thus, after the data was gathered, the scale was reversed to ensure consistency. The reliability of the scale, from these past studies, was recorded as .91, thus indicating high reliability (DeVellis, 2012).

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collection procedure was conducted during October and November, 2018 for a time frame of three weeks, by using an online questionnaire. A statistical program was used to compute and analyze the data gathered and the statistics were run at 95.0% confidence level.

Findings

There was a total of 227 questionnaires collected, out of which 21 were discarded as the respondents did not qualify the screening section of the questionnaire. Thus, a total of 206 final responses were used with a response rate of 90.7%. The characteristics of the respondents were depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 The Respondents' characteristics

Gender	<i>f</i>	%	Average Monthly Income		
			<i>f</i>	%	
Female	173	83.98	THB 30,000 or less	53	25.73
Male	30	14.56	THB 30,001-40,000	78	37.86
Others	3	1.46	THB 40,001-50000	36	17.48
			THB 50,001 and up	39	18.93
Age	<i>f</i>	%	Occupation		
			<i>f</i>	%	
18-25	68	33.01	Student	24	11.65
26-33	105	50.97	Employee	131	63.59
34-40	33	16.02	Professional	36	17.48
			Homemaker	15	7.28

Source Characteristics of the Online Influencer

The source characteristics of the online influencer, Kaushal, were measured using two dimensions, source credibility and source attractiveness. Firstly, source characteristics was

considered as a whole. The average score reflected the respondent's opinions on the source characteristics of the online influencer, Kaushal. Table 2 depicts the scores given by the respondents.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of the Source Characteristics of the Online Influencer

Source Characteristics	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Source Credibility	3.69	0.92
Expertise	3.76	0.94
Trustworthiness	3.62	0.99
Source Attractiveness	3.68	0.61
Likeability	4.27	0.63
Similarity	3.09	0.87
Total	3.69	0.69

Note: For the factors Expertise, Trustworthiness and Likeability, a bi-polar semantic differential scale was used, where the score 5 shows a strong agreement with the positive item and the score 1 shows a strong agreement with the negative item. Cronbach's Alpha for this scale = .98.

For the factor Similarity, a Likert Scale was used, where the score 5 depicts a strong agreement with the statement and the score 1 depicts a strong disagreement with the statement. Cronbach's Alpha for the scale = .89.

Attitude towards the Brand

The average rating the respondents gave for their attitude for L'Oréal was 4.10, indicating that they had a positive attitude towards the brand. As per the attitude scale, the item or adjective that got the highest score was *positive*, with a score of 4.12. The item under attitude with the least score was *favorable*, with a score of 4.08.

The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the attitude scale is .97, depicting a high reliability of the scale. Furthermore, this value corresponds to the original, Bouhleh, Mzoughi, Ghachem, and

Negra's (2010) and Ohanian's (1990) scale, which had a reliability of .97.

Purchase Intention for L'Oréal Products

The results depicted that the respondents had a moderate level of agreement to the purchase intention for L'Oréal's products, as the mean score given for the participants' purchase intention was 3.90. The statement with the highest score was '*I have no intention to buy L'Oréal's products.*' The data gathered from this statement was reversed as this was the only negative statement. Thus, the

data portrayed that the respondents have an intention to purchase L'Oréal's products, as the score for this statement was 4.20.

The Cronbach's alpha reliability for this scale for purchase intention is .77, ensuring reliability. This value does not exactly correspond to the original Putrevu and Lord's (1994) and Taylor and Baker's (1994) scales, which had a reliability of .91, however it still portrays a high reliability.

Relationship between Source Characteristics, Consumers' Attitude and Purchase Intention

A Pearson's Product Moment Correlation test was run to explore the relationship among the three variables. Based on the results depicted in Table 3,

source characteristics and *consumers' attitude* have a significantly moderate positive relationship ($r = .55$, $p = .00$). This implies that, a change in the respondents' opinions of the source characteristics of the online influencer, whether it is an increase or a decrease, is likely to relate to a change in the respondents' attitude towards the brand.

It is also seen that *source characteristics* have a significantly moderate positive relationship with *consumers' purchase intention*. The correlation score deduced was .51 ($p = .00$). This implies that if there was a change in the respondents' opinions of the source characteristics of the online influencer Kaushal, whether it is an increase or a decrease, it is likely to relate the consumers' purchase intention for L'Oréal products.

Table 3 Correlation between Source Characteristics, Consumers' Attitude, and Purchase Intention

Relationship between	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Source Characteristics and consumers' attitude	.55	.00
Source Characteristics and consumers' purchase intention	.51	.00

Lastly, both the hypotheses were accepted. It was predicted that there is a positive relationship between the source characteristics of the online influencer and consumers' attitude, and this result was depicted in the findings. Likewise, the second hypothesis, which predicted that there was also a positive relationship between the source characteristics of the online influencer and the consumers' purchase intention, was also accepted.

Discussion

Source Characteristics of the Online Influencer

The data analysis findings for source characteristics revealed that overall, the respondents had a moderately positive opinion of the online influencer, Kaushal, as they rated her a 3.69 out of 5.00. This could be the case, as Kaushal is known to be one of the top influencers in the world, in regard to the beauty industry and constantly partners with beauty brands to promote their products (Muttucumaru, 2016). The results also depicted that both the dimensions of source characteristics, source credibility, and source attractiveness received similar ratings. Another possible reason is that the respondents are Indian, so they share the same background and characteristics as Kaushal. Thus, they perceived that Kaushal are credible and attractive as a L'Oréal's influencer;

Kaushal was really likable, in particular ($M = 4.27$).

These results were concurrent with another past study done on source characteristics by Seiler and Kucza (2017), which looked that how credible and attractive influencers can somewhat affect consumers' attitude and purchase intention. The findings portrayed that the credibility and the attractiveness of an influencer are vital dimensions which consumers consider when following an influencer or accepting recommendations from them. Moreover, the findings from this study were consistent with another study on online influencers, where it was seen that Millennials and Gen Z believed in an influencer and their characteristics more than any other reference groups (Positioning, 2018).

Thus, as mentioned earlier, the findings from the source characteristics portrayed that overall, both dimensions are equally crucial. Under source credibility, the factor which was the most dominant was *expertise*, while the factor under source attractiveness, which was most dominant, was *likeability*. In this case, the findings reflected that L'Oréal implied the right influencer for their brand and for their international target customers. That is, L'Oréal is a global brand targeting women across the world, so their influencers should be able to portray different beauty, diversity, and internationality of L'Oréal.

Attitude towards the Brand

Overall, the respondents felt significantly positive about L'Oréal. This could be the case, as L'Oréal is recognized to be a renowned international brand with a positive brand image (Willett & Gould, 2017). The item under attitude, which received the highest mean score was *positive*. This could also be due to the fact that L'Oréal is an established brand in the global beauty market and works with the top celebrities worldwide, who vouch and promote the brand. Moreover, it could also be due to the fact that the quality of L'Oréal's products is top knot and are used by people worldwide (Willett & Gould, 2017). The results for the respondents' attitude of the brand are consistent with the previous study by Hakala (2012), which looked at the effect of a make-up artist to L'Oréal Paris's brand image. This study used a make-up artist as an influencer to evaluate and change consumers' perception of the brand and to understand their attitude towards the brand. The results revealed that the attitude towards the brand was positive and the respondents had a positive image of the brand, because of the make-up artist and because of L'Oréal being a popular cosmetic brand, worldwide.

Purchase Intention for L'Oréal Products

The findings revealed that respondents had a significantly positive purchase intention for the brand's products as the overall mean score was 3.90 out of 5.0. The statement that got that highest mean score was *'I have an intention to buy L'Oréal's products.'* The data for this statement were reversed, as the initial statement was negative. It received an overall score of 4.20 out of 5.0, depicting that the respondents were in fact quite likely to purchase L'Oréal's products. This could be the case as all of the participants of the study had previously bought or used L'Oréal's products and thus they were current users of the brand, which could make them more likely to purchase the brand's products again, out of habit (Hakala, 2012).

Furthermore, since the participants had a previous interaction with the brand's products, it is possible that they are regular or loyal customers of the brand and thus would purchase the brand. Also, L'Oréal is well known around the world for their quality and thus many of the respondents could be likely to purchase the brand's products due to this reason. Lastly, beauty products are considered to be low-involvement products, as the price of such products are relatively affordable and thus don't require much time and thought while purchasing.

Relationship between Source Characteristics and Consumers' Attitude towards the Brand

The findings from the correlation analysis revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the source characteristics of the online influencer, Kaushal, and the consumers' attitude towards the brand, thus accepting the first hypothesis. This could be the case as the theory of source characteristics, by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly's (1953) also explains that, the receivers of a message would have a positive attitude towards an object if they also felt positively about the source of the information. Also, there could be a positive relationship between the two variables as Erdogan's (1999) theory explains that when consumers agree with the source characteristics of an influencer, it tends to influence their beliefs, opinions, and attitudes.

The findings from this research also support Kiecker and Cowles's (2001) study on Interpersonal communication and personal communication on the internet, which found a positive relationship between the source characteristics of the source of the message and the respondents' attitude.

Lastly, the findings depicted that the factor *likeability*, under source characteristics received the highest score and was able to relate to how consumer's felt positively about the brand, thus it can be considered that what is beautiful is good. In other words, Kaushal was most perceived as likeable, so the likeability of Kaushal can be transformed to L'Oréal, which is the brand that Kaushal endorsed (Solomon, 2018).

Relationship between Source Characteristics and Consumers' Purchase Intention

It was discovered that there is a significant positive relationship between the source characteristics of the online influencer and the purchase intention towards the brand's products, thus also accepting the second hypothesis. This could be due to the fact that the respondents like the influencer and thus want to buy the products that are promoted by her (Erdogan, 1999). Moreover, these results could also be based on the theory by Woodside and Davenport (1974), which explains that when a source is high in credibility and in attractiveness, it tends to bring about higher behavioral compliances compared to when sources are scored low in credibility and in attractiveness (Ross, 1973).

Also, consumers positive opinion on a source's characteristics can create positive stereotypes and higher purchase intentions (Baker & Churchill, 1977). The results from this study were consistent with Hovland and Weiss's (1951) study, which depicted that the respondents who gave high scores to the source characteristics of the influencer, also rated the purchase intention

for the brand higher, thus depicting that there is a relationship between the two variables. The findings also showed and supported the claims that sources who are credible and attractive tend to create more impact on the audience and push them to action (Hovland et al., 1953). Lastly, the results from this study were similar to another study on online influencers, where 59% of the respondents were likely to purchase a product based on the influencer's suggestion or recommendations (Positioning, 2018).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Overall, the study was successful and yield positive results, however there was one limitation that can be identified and worked upon in the future. The current study sampled only Indian men and women living in Bangkok. Thus, the sample was restricted to one cultural community only. In the future, the sample used in such research, should be expanded to people from other cultures or even Indians around the world, that follow the online influencer, Kaushal.

To further expand and improve this research, future researchers should attempt at expanding the method of data collection and also using a qualitative approach, in addition to the existing quantitative one. Utilizing a qualitative approach, in the form of in-depth interviews or focus groups will allow the researchers to receive more in-depth knowledge on what consumer's mean or look for when they think about the source credibility and source attractiveness of an influencer. Moreover, this study can be further expanded by looking at two online influencers. Comparing the respondents' opinions on two different online influencers will help understand how consumers feel towards different influencers and which characteristics best identify that influencer. Likewise, online influencers representing brands of different industries, could also be used to see which characteristics the respondents look for in an influencer in that particular field or industry.

Practical Implications

From the results of the study, it is apparent that source characteristics are considered when a consumer looks at and follows an online influencer of a beauty brand. Moreover, when there are brands from these the fashion or beauty industry, consumers place more importance on the external beauty, or the physical appearance and how well the influencer knows about the products. Thus, marketers of beauty and fashion brands should take these insights and carefully pick influencers who are

likeable and knowledgeable. Doing so would make their campaigns more effective in creating a favorable attitude towards the brand and driving people to purchase the brand's products.

The findings from the research also observe that overall, the two dimensions of source characteristics, which are source credibility and source attractiveness, both play vital roles in how an influencer is perceived. Thus, when deciding which influencer would best represent the brands, marketers should consider that the source is seen to be both, credible and attractive by potential consumers, as this can have an effect on the consumers attitude and purchase intention, especially for a beauty brand.

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