

THE INFLUENCE OF BEAUTY INFLUENCERS ON INSTAGRAM ON THE FEMALE POPULATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA: ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN OF DIFFERENT AGE AND EDUCATION

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Abstract: Modern marketing activities cannot be imagined without a combination of traditional and digital marketing channels, with digital marketing channels gaining more and more importance. Digital marketing channels include a large number of channels, of which the website, social networks, blogs, paid advertising on search engines and mobile marketing are particularly important. Social networks as a digital marketing channel are particularly suitable for influencing consumers. In addition to organic advertising and paid advertising, the engagement of influencers who market informative and interesting content for a specific target group is becoming more and more important. Instagram is a particularly important social network for influencers, due to the presence of a large number of users. The aim of this paper is to investigate the importance of influencer marketing on Instagram to the female population in the beauty industry, but also to identify the factors that influence the importance of influencer marketing in this industry. For this purpose, adequate statistical tests were applied, which showed that in Republica, Serbia, trust in influencers and the useful content they market are considered particularly important, but also that the credibility and creativity of beauty influencers are exceptionally significant, especially when it comes to more educated women.

Keywords: influencer marketing, influencer, marketing, instagram, beauty industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become an indispensable part of modern life, especially when it comes to the younger population. This was certainly introduced by marketers, which led to the fact that a large number of brands in the world and in our country today have profiles on social networks, where they advertise organic content. Also, a large number of brands also use paid advertising on these platforms with the aim of inviting users to some action (purchase, liking the page, signing up for the newsletter, etc.). (Dwivedi et al., 2015)

However, in addition to the organic and paid content that brands place via social networks, they often hire people who have an influence on other people, i.e. influencers, with the aim of using their influence to increase brand awareness and encourage consumers to buy. Influencers are known as people who have gained a large following and are considered influential to the individuals who follow them, that is, who trust them. (De Veirman et al., 2014; Dijkmans et al. 2015; Shareef et al., 2019). When brands hire influencers, it is extremely important to ensure that the specific influencer has an impact on the same target group as the brand itself. Otherwise, the effects of engaging influencers, i.e. influencer marketing, will be absent. (Zahay, 2022)

Instagram, as a social network, is particularly interesting for marketers, both because of the large number of users and because of the opportunities it offers for marketing. The beauty industry, which is the subject of analysis in this paper, sees Instagram as a particularly good network for marketing its products and services. As part of their marketing on this social network, companies operating in the beauty industry very often hire influencers.

Research has shown that the stories of influencers and their advice have a strong influence on consumer decisions and that this method of advertising gives significantly better effects compared to traditional methods of advertising (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008).

In his research, Bojang (2017) discussed the role that trust plays when it comes to influencer marketing in the beauty industry. He pointed out that on social networks, fans and influencers in the beauty industry do not know each other directly. For this reason, in the conducted research, he came to the conclusion that the influencer's credibility is a key link to success. Without the trust of his followers, it is not possible to have effective influencer marketing. Bruns (2018) reached similar conclusions in his work. According to him, trust also has the effect of reducing the sense of

confusion and ambiguity of customers, which encourages them to take action or change their buying habits, directing them towards the brand introduced by the influencer they follow.

In his analysis, Lee (2020) came to the conclusion that influencers have a personal predisposition to influence the purchase decisions of other customers. Based on his research, he indicated that they have become reputable, popular and insightful sources of information because of their ability to communicate with their peers and their target groups.

Chapple (2017) came to similar views. He did his research in the field of influencer marketing in the cosmetic industry. Based on the collected and statistically processed data, he came to the conclusion that influential people in the cosmetics and skin care industries generate a positive impact on consumer purchase intent, especially for luxury brands.

All research indicates that influencers have an increasing influence on consumers, both in the beauty industry and in other areas. For this reason, below will be presented the methodology, and then the results of the conducted research, which should give us an answer to the question of how effective influencer marketing on Instagram is in the area of the beauty industry in the Republic of Serbia.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

With the aim of conducting research on influencer marketing in the beauty industry and determining which group of women influencers on Instagram have the greatest influence, a survey was designed and data was collected from respondents.

Data were collected by 310 respondents. When collecting data, only women between the ages of 18 and 50 from the territory of the Republic of Serbia were included in the analysis. In this way, we confirmed that the research is based on a representative sample of respondents, who correspond to the profile of the participants we were looking for for the survey. The decision to take into account only female respondents was made based on the fact that no such research has been conducted in this area on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Conducting such research can provide important conclusions, both scientific and practical. The questionnaire distribution process was carried out by sending questionnaires to the e-mail addresses of potential respondents, as well as via Facebook Messenger and personal contacts. Also, it is important to note that all the respondents are Instagram users and follow certain influencers, which was also one of the criteria when selecting the respondents. The period during which the questionnaire was distributed and data collected from respondents was August 2, 2023 - September 2, 2023.

This research phase was preceded by an analysis of the available literature and the results of empirical research dealing with this topic. Based on these researches, a questionnaire was created. The questionnaire itself included general questions about the demographic characteristics of the female respondents who took part in the survey - age, education, but the respondents were also invited to rate seven statements about influencers and influencer marketing in the beauty industry on a scale of 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - I completely agree. The statements that were evaluated were defined based on the analyzed literature. (Chapple, 2017; Bojang, 2017; Lee, 2020; Bruns, 2018)

The data were processed in the SPSS software package. They were first coded, and then adequate tests were applied. In addition to descriptive statistics, one-factor analysis of variance was also applied. The conclusion that these tests are suitable for this type of analysis is based on an analysis of representative statistical literature. (Pallant, 2009; Baarda et al., 2019; Rovai et al., 2013)

The research methodology defined in this way allows us to test the following hypotheses:

H1. Influencers have a large influence on female consumers in making their purchasing decisions for beauty products;

H2. The credibility of influencers in the beauty industry is a very important factor that influences women to make a decision to buy products that influencers present to them on Instagram;

H3. Content published by influencers in the beauty industry must be creative in order to encourage followers to buy;

H4. The influence of beauty influencers on female consumers does not depend on the level of education of those women.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of female respondents (n = 310)

	n	%
Age		
18-28	112	36,13
29-40	123	39,68
41-50	75	24,19
Education		
High School	91	29,35
College	41	13,23
Faculty	136	43,87
Master, Ph.D	42	13,55

As mentioned earlier, the analysis includes only women who have profiles on the social media platform Instagram and reside in the Republic of Serbia. Their age distribution is presented in Table 1. As shown, the majority of the participants in the study are between 29 and 40 years old, accounting for 39.68%. It is worth noting that the participation of women in all age groups who took part in the survey is high, allowing for adequate conclusions to be drawn based on the analysis.

Looking at the educational background of the respondents, we can observe that the majority have completed college and high school, while 13.23% and 13.55% of the respondents have completed college or master's/doctoral studies, respectively.

3. RESULTS

Table number 3 shows us the ratings of statements provided to the respondents, related to influencer marketing in the beauty industry on Instagram. The reliability of the measurement scale was tested using Cronbach's coefficient. In the case of this research, the Cronbach's coefficient is 0.931, indicating a high reliability between the observed variables.

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistic analysis

Influencer marketing on Instagram ($\alpha = 0.931$)	M	SD
The credibility of influencers plays a crucial role in my purchasing decisions for products from beauty industry	4.24	1.198
Trust in influencers directly influences my choice of beauty products	4.17	1.212
The content influencers share on Instagram often influences my interest in specific brands	4.21	1.167
Influencers in the beauty industry often provide useful information about products	3.97	1.149
Influencers in the beauty industry often act as reliable sources of information about products	4.09	1.361
The quality and authenticity of the content created by influencers directly affect my trust	4.14	1.148
Influencers have the power to prompt me to make an impulsive purchase decision of some beauty industry product	4.00	1.139

If we look at the results from the table, we can see that the first statement received the highest rating (4.24), and it relates to the significance of influencers' credibility in the beauty industry. Therefore, influencers with higher credibility among their followers will increase their follower count and, at the same time, be more effective in influencing their followers to connect with a brand. The lowest rating is assigned to statement number 4, which states, "Influencers in the beauty industry often provide useful information about products." This indicates that the content offered by beauty influencers to their followers is not always useful for them. However, it is important to note that the calculated average rating for this statement is high, but compared to other statements, it is lower.

Table 3. Results of one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) according to age

Influencer marketing on Instagram	Average values			F	p
	18-28	29-40	41-50		
Influencers in the beauty industry often provide useful information about products	4.12	4.01	3.78	2.298	0.031
Influencers have the power to prompt me to make an impulsive purchase decision of some beauty industry product	4.40	3.99	3.61		

In Table 3, a significant difference in ratings is observed for only two out of seven statements, specifically statements number 4 and 7. Based on the presented results, differences are evident between respondents aged 18-28 and 41-50 years. Older participants tend to give lower ratings to the statement indicating that influencers often create useful content and encourage impulsive purchases of the products they showcase on their Instagram profiles.

Table 4 Results of one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) - education

Click on the paid ad on social networks	Education				F	p
	Secondary school	Higher School	Faculty	Master, PhD		
The credibility of influencers plays a crucial role in my purchasing decisions for products from beauty industry	3.78	3.98	4.42	4.78	2.369	0.029
The quality and authenticity of the content created by influencers directly affect my trust	3.31	4.0	4.51	4.75	2.798	0.017

As can be seen in Table number 4, there are significant variations in the responses of the respondents depending on their level of education for statements number 1 and 6. Namely, these statements related to the credibility of beauty influencers and the authenticity of content are considerably higher rated by respondents with higher education compared to those who have completed high school.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the conducted analysis in the Republic of Serbia, including female respondents using Instagram with ages between 18 and 50, we can observe that influencers are highly esteemed when it comes to beauty products. All statements provided to the respondents were rated exceptionally high, ranging from 3.97 to 4.24.

The participants in this study have shown that the opinion of influencers about beauty products is extremely important to them before making a purchase decision. Additionally, respondents have indicated through their responses that they highly value the creativity in the content creation of beauty influencers, particularly among those who are highly educated.

Older participants, belonging to the age group of 41-50, expect a high level of creativity and innovation in presenting beauty products. This is evident from the responses of these participants, who do not believe that the beauty influencers they follow are ready to frequently create interesting and creative content, and they expect an even higher level of creativity. In contrast, younger participants have rated the beauty influencers they follow highly. The results obtained from the analysis allow us to either prove or refute the defined hypotheses in the methodology of this study. Hypothesis H1, which states, "Influencers have a large influence on female consumers in making their purchasing decisions for beauty products," is proven. Based on the responses of the participants to the provided statements, it is evident that beauty influencers have a significant impact on the decision to purchase products they present on their Instagram profiles.

The second hypothesis of the study, that "The credibility of influencers in the beauty industry is a very important factor that influences women to make a decision to buy products that influencers present to them on Instagram," is also accepted, with the note that it is particularly significant for women with a college, master's, or doctoral degree. Hypothesis H3 is also proven. The significance of the content that beauty influencers deliver via Instagram is highly valued by the participants, but it is worth noting that older participants expect an even higher level of creativity from beauty influencers on the social media platform.

Hypothesis H4, "The influence of beauty influencers on female consumers does not depend on the level of education of those women," is not proven. We do not accept this hypothesis because there is a significant difference between highly educated women and those who have completed high school, especially regarding statements 1 and 6. By proving these hypotheses, we have arrived at identical conclusions as Chapple (2017), Bojang (2017), Lee (2020),

and Bruns (2018), who have also demonstrated the significant impact of influencers on Instagram in influencing followers to decide on purchasing a product they represent or to connect with a particular brand.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Influencer marketing on all social media platforms has been gaining increasing significance year after year. In this study, an analysis was conducted on the impact of beauty influencers on female Instagram users between the ages of 18 and 50 in the Republic of Serbia. The results clearly indicate that influencers play a significant role, especially when it comes to women's skincare products. Additionally, the findings highlight that beauty influencers need to elevate the quality of content they share on Instagram and consistently work on their credibility, which is crucial for women in making purchasing decisions based on the products presented by the beauty influencer. Future research on this topic should focus on analyzing the content delivered by influencers to determine which type of content is most beneficial for users of this social network.

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