Examining the Effect of Influencer Credibility and Social Media Exposure on Consumer Buying Behaviour: The Mediating role of Consumer Trust towards Cosmetic Products

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Abstract: - The expansion of social media has transformed the way consumers acquire product information and make purchasing decisions. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Influencer credibility and Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour, with mediating role of Consumer trust towards Cosmetic products. Primary data were obtained through a structured online questionnaire from 350 consumers in Chennai city, India, who had prior experience in purchasing cosmetic products online. A Purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents based on predefined eligibility criteria. The obtained data were analysed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to assess the measurement and structural models and test the proposed relationships among the study constructs. The result reveal that influencer credibility shows significant positive effect on Consumer trust ($\beta = 0.871$, $p<0.001$). Similarly, social media exposure also shows significant positive effect on Consumer trust ($\beta= 0.088$, $p=0.024$). while, Consumer trust shows significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour ($\beta=0.434$, $p<0.001$). However, influencer credibility does not have a significant direct effect on Consumer buying behaviour ($\beta=0.197$, $p=0.208$), whereas Social media exposure shows a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour ($\beta=0.546$, $p<0.001$). The mediation effect further indicates that Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour ($\beta = 0.018$, $p=0.887$), whereas Consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between Social media exposure and Consumer buying behaviour relationship ($\beta=0.087$, $p= 0.025$). The findings suggests that Social media exposure plays a prevalent role in shaping Consumer buying behaviour, whereas influencer credibility is essential for building Consumer trust. The study provides implications for cosmetic marketers, influencers and brands to develop credible, apparent and effective social media strategies to emphasize consumer trust that supports consumers' buying decisions.

Key-Words: - Influencer credibility, Social media exposure, Consumer trust, Consumer buying behaviour, cosmetic products, digital marketing.

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1 Introduction

As digital technologies emerge, social media usage increases tremendously; businesses increasingly adopt digital marketing approaches to engage target audiences, as it demonstrates greater effectiveness in establishing Consumer trust and emotional connections, leveraging influencers' perceived credibility and personal rapport with consumers [1]. The growth of social media platforms has significantly influenced Consumer buying behaviour in the cosmetic industry. Therefore, it examines the factors that shape consumer decision-making when purchasing cosmetic products on social media, with a focus on visual appeal, social proof, influencer marketing, and the psychological impact of trends [2]. The main purpose of this study is to examine how influencer credibility and Social media exposure shape Consumer buying behaviour through Consumer trust towards cosmetic products. The rapid evolution of social media and the rising dependence on digital influencers for product recommendations increase consumers' purchase decisions.

This study aims to understand the extent to which influencer credibility, Social media exposure, and Consumer trust shapes Consumer buying behaviour towards cosmetic products. The influencer credibility and Social media exposure have transformed from conventional to contemporary. This transformation reflects changing preferences for authenticity and trust over sheer popularity, enhancing influencer credibility, Social media exposure, and Consumer

trust towards Consumer buying behaviour. Existing studies have reported that factors such as the influencer's trustworthiness, attractiveness and similarity to followers positively impact Consumer trust, brand awareness and purchase intentions.

Previous literature has concentrated predominantly on examining the direct effects of influencer credibility and Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour. There is a lack of empirical studies that examine Consumer trust as a mediating variable linking these factors together. Furthermore, there is a limited focus on cosmetic products, especially in the Chennai region. By addressing the gaps, the study attempts to examine the effects of influencer credibility and Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour with the mediating role of Consumer trust towards cosmetic products in Chennai using a Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling approach. This study seeks to provide insights that assist marketers, brands and influencers to employ effective strategies to enhance consumer engagement, trust, and purchase decisions of cosmetic products.

2 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Influencer Credibility

Influencers play a central role in brand marketing strategies; their perceived credibility significantly affects consumer behaviour on social media platforms [3]. Similarly, Consumers are more likely to purchase products endorsed by influencers because they perceive influencers as credible and loyal [4]. Influencers with large followings and high-quality content on social media are perceived as reliable, authentic and trustworthy, as their fame amplifies their perceived expertise [5]. Previous studies have reported that highly credible influencers significantly impact consumer attitudes towards online buying [6].

Recent studies highlight that influencer credibility strengthens emotional relationships between influencers and followers, which in turn significantly increases purchase intentions and brand evaluation [7]. Furthermore, as the use of influencers in marketing grows, it is significant for organisations and marketers to understand how influencer credibility affects people, and influencer credibility considerably affects customer purchasing behaviour when platform trust is exalted [8]. The findings suggest that credible and trustworthy endorsements by influencer significantly impacts Consumer buying behaviour in online platforms.

2.2 Social media exposure

Social media serve as an instrument for communication, learning, and networking, but extreme usage may result in digital stress, anxiety, and social isolation. Social media exposure is both beneficial and divergent, depending on the context and intensity of social media usage. Earlier studies have reported that most of the consumers spend time with social media daily, reflecting a high level of engagement with online platforms and implying that consumers are consistently exposed to social media [9].

Previous studies emphasise that Social media exposure significantly influences Consumer buying behaviour through social media influencers, peer groups, and online reviews [10], [11]. Likewise, Social media exposure contributes positively to building social confidence by fostering group cohesion and efficacy [12]. The findings suggest that Social media exposure enhances consumers' cognitive and social skills, thus drives buying decisions.

2.3 Consumer trust

Consumer trust refers to the belief that consumers have towards a brand or product, which influences their purchasing decision. Similarly, Consumer trust plays a critical role in the decision-making process, and it is a fundamental factor in shaping consumers' purchase intentions, [13], [14]. Consumer trust is essential for fostering loyalty and ensuring long-term success in the digital marketplace. Furthermore, transparent communication with reliable and responsive customer service enhances consumer trust, strengthening consumer relationships and driving loyalty [15].

Previous studies have reported that Consumer trust mediates the relationship between social media and influencers' credibility and buying behaviour, indicating that credible influencers can effectively influence consumer preferences [16], [17]. Further, higher trust level leads to positive consumer responses and drive purchase intentions [18]. The findings suggest that trust persuades consumers to develop more favourable attitude towards cosmetic products which influence their buying decisions.

2.4 Consumer buying behaviour

In the rapidly emerging landscape of digital marketing, understanding Consumer buying behaviour is essential for businesses aiming to enhance their market presence and drive sales [19].

Consumer behaviour is the reaction or response to different products or companies when making a buying decision; a consumer goes through a process to gather all necessary information relevant to the product.

Furthermore, consumer behaviour is shaped by personal experience, the influence of social and peer groups, knowledge of the product, the service provided by the company, and the company's background and reputation [20]. Similarly, demographic factors such as age, gender, income, education and marital status significantly influence Consumer buying behaviour [21]. Previous studies have reported that Consumer buying behaviour is influenced by various factors including demographics, psychological aspects and cultural and social class [22], [23]. The findings indicate that understanding the buying behaviour of diverse consumers is essential to create more effective marketing strategies and reach potential consumers.

The proposed conceptual framework illustrates the hypothesis relationships between influencer credibility, Social media exposure, Consumer trust and Consumer buying behaviour. The conceptual model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

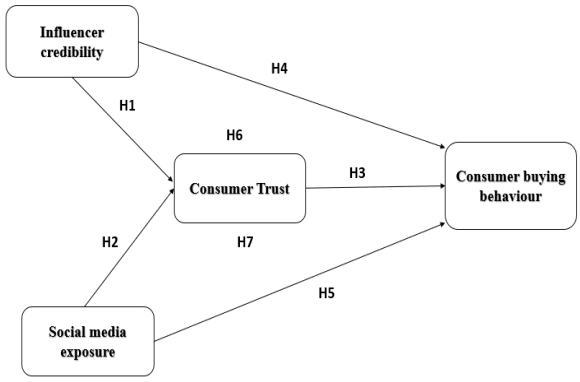


Fig. 1: Research conceptual model
Source: By the Authors

H1: Influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on Consumer trust.

H2: Social media exposure has a significant positive effect on Consumer trust.

H3: Consumer trust has a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour.

H4: Influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour.

H5: Social media exposure has a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour.

H6: Consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between Influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour.

H7: Consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between Social media exposure and Consumer buying behaviour.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research adopted a quantitative and descriptive research design to examine the effect of influencer credibility and Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour through the mediating role of Consumer trust towards cosmetic products. Cosmetic products were selected because of consumers' frequent exposure to influencer endorsements, reviews and social media content while searching for information about cosmetic products. The population of this study consists of consumers in Chennai city, India. Chennai was selected as the study area because it provides an appropriate urban consumer context, with respondents exposed to social media, high digital usage and online cosmetic purchasing behaviour. This study employs purposive sampling. The participants were selected based on predefined eligibility criteria.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data were collected from respondents using a structured online questionnaire conducted from December 2025 to February 2026. The questionnaire was administered using Google Forms. The questionnaire was circulated among eligible respondents residing in Chennai city, India, who had relevant experience with cosmetic purchases. A total of 350 valid responses were obtained. The questionnaire consists of demographic characteristics of the respondents, and the major constructs include influencer credibility and Social media exposure as independent variables, Consumer buying behaviour as the dependent variable and Consumer trust as a mediator in the research.

The collected data were subsequently coded and analysed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyse and validate the reliability of the questionnaire and test the proposed hypotheses. PLS-SEM can estimate complex relationships and emphasize prediction, which helps researchers conduct their experiments accurately and conveniently [24]. The analysis covers the measurement model, which measures outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and Composite reliability and Discriminant validity, and the Structural model evaluates the path coefficients and significance testing through bootstrapping process.

Informed consent was obtained. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary, and the collected responses were solely used for research purposes. The confidentiality of the information provided by all the respondents was maintained.

4 Statistical Analysis and Interpretation

The demographic distribution of the respondents provides an overview of the characteristics of the consumers who participated in the study. In this study, primary data were obtained from 350 respondents in Chennai, India, who had prior experience in purchasing cosmetic products online.

The demographic profile is presented in terms of frequency and percentage distribution, comprising age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income and frequency of purchasing cosmetic products.

From the Table 1 (Appendix), it is inferred that Majority of the respondents, 33.7% belong to 36-45 age group of people, Gender shows majority, 51.7% of Female respondents, 44.6% of the respondents were undergraduates in education level, Monthly income of the respondents, 32.9% falls between ₹60,000–₹80,000 and 41.4% of the consumers who very frequently buys cosmetic products in online.

4.1 Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model (outer) evaluates the reliability and validity of the constructs in the study. This model examines outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion, Heterotrait-monotrait ratio).

The measurement construct model illustrating the relationships between the constructs and their indicators is presented in Figure 2.

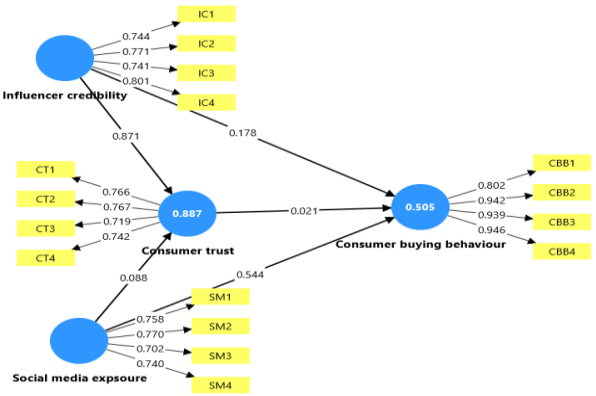


Fig. 2: Measurement construct model
Source: created by the authors

The measurement construct model examines four major constructs, such as Influencer credibility, Social media exposure, Consumer trust and Consumer buying behaviour, emphasizing good relationships among the constructs. The indicator loadings of each construct exceed the recommended threshold of >0.70, indicating satisfactory indicator reliability and construct adequacy.

The Path coefficient from influencer credibility to Consumer trust (β= 0.871) shows a strong positive relationship, indicating that when consumers perceive influencers as credible, trustworthy and authentic, their trust towards cosmetic products increases rapidly. This is pertinent because consumers often depend influencers as a basis for product information search and recommendation. Similarly, Social media exposure to Consumer trust (β= 0.088) shows a positive relationship, indicating that consumers may encounter product information, reviews, and advertisements frequently on social media, which precedes trust formation.

The path coefficient from influencer credibility to Consumer buying behaviour (β= 0.178) indicates a positive relationship, suggesting that credible influencers influence buying behaviour of consumers, but the relationship is not statistically significant. Further, Social media exposure to Consumer buying behaviour (β= 0.544) indicates a moderately strong positive relationship, representing that consumers who often exposed to cosmetic product content on social media are more likely to involve in buying activity. Furthermore, Consumer trust to Consumer buying behaviour (β= 0.021) shows a weak positive relationship, indicating that consumers may trust and belief the information online, but factors such as product price, suitability, previous purchase experience, and exposure play a vital role in buying decisions.

The indirect path coefficient from influencer credibility on Consumer buying behaviour through Consumer trust is strong and significant (β=0.871) implying that consumers may perceive influencers as reliable and develops trust among them, but trust alone may not be sufficient to influence consumers cosmetic buying behaviour. Therefore, Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour. Similarly, the indirect path coefficient from Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour through Consumer trust shows a positive and significant relationship (β=0.887), suggesting that consumers who repeatedly exposed to cosmetic-related information on social media see reviews, advertisements, influencer recommendations and

user experiences. Thus, Consumer trust plays a significant mediating role in decoding Social media exposure to Consumer buying behaviour.

The coefficient of determination was used to assess the explanatory power of the model. The R^2 value of 0.887 indicates that 88.7% of the variance in Consumer trust is explained by influencer credibility and Social media exposure, representing a high explanatory power. The R^2 value of 0.505 represents that 50.5% of the variance in Consumer buying behaviour is explained by influencer credibility, Social media exposure and Consumer trust, indicating moderate explanatory power.

Table 2. Outer Loadings

Indicators	**CBB**	**CT**	**IC**	**SME**
CBB1	0.802			
CBB2	0.942			
CBB3	0.939			
CBB4	0.946			
CT1		0.766		
CT2		0.767		
CT3		0.719		
CT4		0.742		
IC1			0.744	
IC2			0.771	
IC3			0.741	
IC4			0.801	
SM1				0.758
SM2				0.770
SM3				0.702
SM4				0.740

Source: created by the authors

Based on the measurement model, the outer loadings of the indicators are associated with each construct. As presented in Table 2, the outer loadings of Influencer credibility range from 0.774 to 0.801. Social media exposure ranging from 0.758 to 0.740. Similarly, Consumer trust has outer loadings ranging from 0.766 to 0.742, whereas Consumer buying behaviour has loadings ranging from 0.802 to 0.946, respectively. All indicators are above 0.70, indicating strong indicator reliability and representing the constructs adequately.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Constructs	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Composite reliability (rho_a)**	**Composite reliability (rho_c)**	**(AVE)**
Consumer buying behaviour	0.928	0.928	0.950	0.827
Consumer trust	0.740	0.743	0.836	0.561
Influencer credibility	0.763	0.766	0.849	0.585
Social media exposure	0.731	0.738	0.831	0.552

Source: created by the authors

From Table 3, it is noticed that Cronbach's alpha value (CA) for all constructs exceed the acceptable threshold of >0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability. Specifically, Consumer buying behaviour has high reliability (α=0.928), suggesting strong reliability among its indicators. Consumer trust, influencer credibility and Social media exposure also met the minimum requirement, showing that the indicators are sufficiently reliable.

Composite reliability (rho_a) and (rho_c) values further strengthen the findings. Especially, Consumer buying behaviour has the highest composite reliability of 0.928 and 0.950. Similarly, influencer credibility has 0.766 and 0.849, Consumer trust has 0.743 and 0.836, and Social media exposure has 0.738 and 0.831, indicating strong reliability.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct is above the threshold of 0.50; Consumer buying behaviour shows the highest AVE of 0.827, followed by influencer credibility 0.585, Consumer trust 0.561 and Social media exposure 0.552, indicating that each variable satisfies the criterion. Hence, it provides strong evidence that the measurement model is adequate and reliable.

Table 4. Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Constructs	**CBB**	**CT**	**IC**	**SME**
Consumer buying behaviour	0.909			
Consumer trust	0.607	0.749		
Influencer credibility	0.624	0.940	0.765	
Social media exposure	0.700	0.769	0.782	0.743

Source: created by the authors

Discriminant validity tests whether a construct is genuinely distinct from other constructs, and the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT are the two main measures for discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion tests whether a latent construct shares more variance with its assigned indicators than with other latent constructs [25].

Based on the Table 4, Consumer buying behaviour √AVE =0.909, which is higher than its correlation with Consumer trust (0.607), influencer credibility (0.624) and Social media exposure (0.700). Consumer trust √AVE = 0.749; it is higher than its correlation with Consumer buying behaviour (0.607), but lower than its correlation with influencer credibility (0.940) and Social media exposure (0.769). Influencer credibility √AVE = 0.765, which is higher than its correlation with Consumer buying behaviour, but lower than its correlation with Consumer trust and Social media exposure. Further, Social media exposure √AVE = 0.743, which is higher than its correlation with Consumer buying behaviour, but lower than Consumer trust and influencer credibility. Therefore, the constructs satisfy the criterion.

Table 5. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)	Results
Consumer trust <-> Consumer buying behaviour	0.708	Discriminant validity established
Influencer credibility <-> Consumer buying behaviour	0.738	Discriminant validity established
Influencer credibility <-> Consumer trust	0.703	Discriminant validity established
Social media exposure <-> Consumer buying behaviour	0.849	Discriminant validity established
Social media exposure <-> Consumer trust	0.722	Discriminant validity established
Social media exposure <-> Influencer credibility	0.754	Discriminant validity established

Source: created by the authors

Table 5. presents the Heterotrait-monotrait ratio. the commonly accepted threshold value for HTMT is <0.90. All constructs, such as influencer credibility, Social media exposure, Consumer trust and Consumer buying behaviour, are below the acceptable threshold. Therefore, the discriminant validity is established among the constructs, indicating that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another and providing evidence of adequate discriminant validity. Therefore, the HTMT results support the discriminant validity of the measurement model

4.2 Structural Model Analysis

The structural, or inner, model is used to examine the relationship among constructs in the proposed research framework. This model measures path coefficients of direct and indirect effects and assesses statistical significance using t- values and p-values and the coefficient of determination between the proposed hypotheses.

Figure 3 presents the bootstrapping model used to examine the hypothesized relationships among the constructs and assess the statistical significance of the proposed paths.

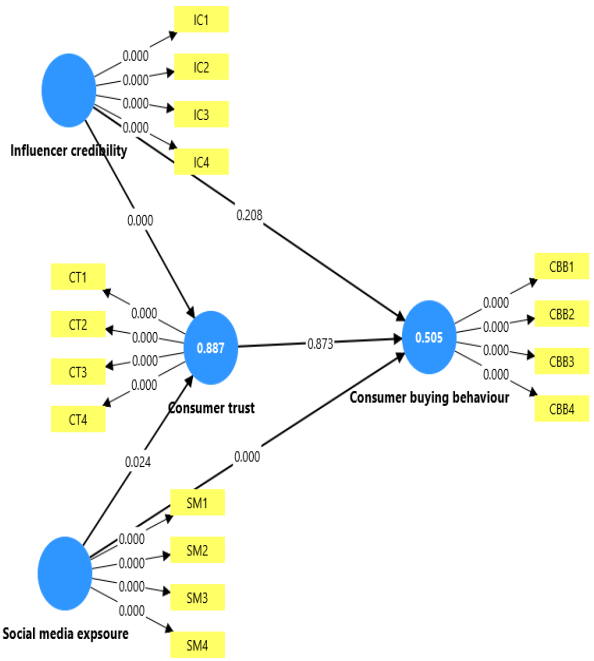


Fig. 3: Bootstrapping construct model
Source: created by the authors

Table 6. presents the path coefficients and significance levels for the direct effects of influencer credibility and Social media exposure on Consumer trust and Consumer buying behaviour, as well as the indirect effects mediated by Consumer trust. These results provide the basis for examining the proposed hypotheses

Table 6. Path Coefficients of Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	(0)	(M)	(SD)	T statistics	p-values
IC -> CT	0.871	0.870	0.037	23.595	0.000
SME-> CT	0.088	0.089	0.039	2.253	0.024
CT -> CBB	0.434	0.437	0.078	6.619	0.000
IC -> CBB	0.197	0.194	0.065	3.024	0.208
SME-> CBB	0.546	0.550	0.061	8.956	0.000
IC-> CT -> CBB	0.018	0.020	0.116	0.160	0.887
SME-> CT-> CBB	0.087	0.089	0.039	2.244	0.025

Source: created by the authors

H1: **Influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on Consumer trust**

The path coefficient from Influencer credibility to Consumer trust shows a very strong, positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.871$, $t = 23.595$, $p < 0.001$). This strong relationship indicates that credible, reliable and trustworthy influencers can strengthen consumers' confidence in buying decisions. The findings suggest that consumers who perceive influencers as credible are expected to develop greater trust in product information.

H2: **Social media exposure has a significant positive effect on Consumer trust**

The path coefficient from Social media exposure to Consumer trust is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.088$, $t = 2.253$, $p=0.024$). This relationship indicates that frequent exposure to information can increase consumers' familiarity with products and provide cues for evaluating authenticity. The findings suggest that when consumers are repeatedly exposed to relevant and useful content on social media, they may develop greater confidence in buying cosmetic products.

H3: **Consumer trust has a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour**

The path coefficient from Consumer trust to Consumer buying behaviour shows a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.434$, $t = 6.619$, $p < 0.001$). The finding indicates that Consumer trust is a key psychological factor influencing consumer behaviour to buy the product. When consumers trust the information provided online, they are more likely to evaluate the cosmetic product and make purchases accordingly.

H4: Influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour

The path coefficient from influencer credibility to Consumer buying behaviour indicates a positive, but not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.197$, $t=3.024$, $p=0.208$). This relationship demonstrates that, in some cases, consumers may have uncertainty regarding product quality, and consumers may perceive influencers who favourably endorse deceptive or fake products. The findings suggest that influencer credibility alone may not be sufficient to influence consumers' buying behaviour.

H5: Social media exposure has a significant positive effect on Consumer buying behaviour.

The path coefficient from Social media exposure to Consumer buying behaviour shows a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.546$, $t = 8.956$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that continuous exposure to social media content may also reinforce product familiarity and stimulate consumers' interest in purchasing cosmetic products, suggesting that greater exposure to social media content positively influences Consumer buying behaviour.

H6: Consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between Influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour

The indirect effect of influencer credibility on Consumer buying behaviour through Consumer trust shows positive, but not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.018$, $t = 0.160$, $p=0.887$). This relationship shows that although influencer credibility has a positive relationship with Consumer trust, the trust through influencer credibility does not transform into a significant effect on Consumer buying behaviour. Thus, the findings indicate that Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour.

H7: Consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between Social media exposure and Consumer buying behaviour

The indirect effect of Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour through Consumer trust shows a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.087$, $t =2.244$, $p= 0.025$). This indicates that increased exposure to social media develops Consumer trust; consumers who belief that the product-related information is trustworthy, subsequently they decide to buy the product. Thus, Social media exposure may influence buying behaviour indirectly through Consumer trust. Hence all the hypothesis is statistically supported.

5 Discussion and Recommendation

The study examined influencer credibility and Social media exposure on Consumer buying behaviour towards cosmetic products, through the mediating role of Consumer trust. The structural model results indicate that influencer credibility, Social media exposure and Consumer trust do not contribute

equally to Consumer buying behaviour. While influencer credibility strongly supports Consumer trust, Social media exposure has direct effect on Consumer buying behaviour. The findings suggest that consumers' cosmetic purchase decisions are formed not only by the credibility of influencers but also by the exposure to social media content, platform reliance and online interactions which meet consumers' requirements.

The positive and significant relationship between influencer credibility and Consumer trust indicates that consumers build confidence when influencers are perceived as credible, reliable and authentic. For cosmetic products, consumers often depend on online sources before making any purchases; influencer credibility can relegate uncertainty and reinforce trust. The findings are consistent with previous research indicating that influencers can strengthen consumer perceptions and positively influence responses towards products or brands [3], [6], [7]. Hence influencer credibility and Social media exposure supports Consumer trust.

The significant relationship between Consumer trust and Consumer buying behaviour demonstrates the significance of trust in online cosmetic purchasing. Consumers cannot physically touch or inspect products while purchasing online; therefore consumers merely trust on information provided through social media and evaluates product reliability and product suitability. The research findings are consistent with previous research identifying Consumer trust as an essential factor influencing buying decisions [12], [15], [18].

Additionally, influencer credibility and Social media exposure have a positive influence on Consumer buying behaviour. Though influencer credibility reveals a positive relationship with buying behaviour, the relationship is not statistically supported, suggesting that credibility alone may not be adequate to persuade perceptions into actual buying behaviour. Consumers may also consider several factors, like product price, quality, suitability, previous experience and preferences obtained from online sources. Whereas Social media exposure exhibits a significant positive relationship with Consumer buying behaviour. These findings indicate that consumers who habitually exposed to cosmetic-related content are more likely to develop awareness, expertise and interest in purchasing cosmetic products. The result is consistent with previous studies suggesting that Social media exposure significantly influences Consumer buying behaviour [10], [11].

The findings of the mediating effect indicate that Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour, suggesting that building trust upon influencers does not transform into buying behaviour, trust formed through influencer credibility may require support from other factors before it results into a purchase response. On the other hand, Consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between Social media exposure and Consumer buying behaviour, indicating partial mediation. This emphasizes that Social media exposure can influence buying behaviour indirectly through Consumer trust.

From a managerial point of view, Cosmetic marketers should not merely depend on influencer endorsements to make purchases, instead, they should enhance and upgrade social media strategies that impart consumers with credible, transparent and informative content. This research supports to the literature by examining influencer credibility, Social media exposure, Consumer trust and buying behaviour within a framework focused on cosmetic products in Chennai city, India. Future studies could implement longitudinal research to provide a wider understanding of consumer purchase intentions. Further research may extend the study by examining other product categories, different countries and another consumer groups.

6 Conclusion

The study results reveal that Social media exposure is a vital factor influencing Consumer buying behaviour. In present study, influencer credibility has a strong positive effect on Consumer trust, while Social media exposure contributes significantly to trust formation. Although influencer credibility contributes to Consumer trust, its direct effect on Consumer buying behaviour is not supported. Similarly, Consumer trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and Consumer buying behaviour. The mediating results confirm that Consumer trust is a prominent mechanism combining Social media exposure with Consumer buying behaviour. The findings offer implications for cosmetic marketers, suggesting that rather than depending solely on influencers, marketers should create effective social media strategies that integrate credible influencer communication with transparent product information and authentic content. The overall findings of the study underscore that cosmetic marketers should focus on building a trustworthy and informative social media environment that supports consumers throughout the purchase decision-making process. Finally, the study proves that Social media exposure

plays a leading role in shaping Consumer buying behaviour, where influencer credibility is particularly essential for building Consumer trust. Therefore, the effectiveness of digital marketing depends not only on the credibility of an individual influencer but also on the level of consumers' exposure to social media content and the trust developed through exposure.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) utilized artificial intelligence (AI) technologies solely for the purpose of linguistic refinement and grammatical correction. Following the application of these tools, the author(s) comprehensively reviewed, verified, and edited the resulting text. The author(s) maintain full accountability and responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the publication.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Demographic distribution of the Respondents

Characteristics	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–25	74	21.1%
	26-35	64	18.3%
	36-45	118	33.7%
	Above 45	94	26.9%
	Total	**350**	**100%**
Gender	Male	169	48.3%
	Female	181	51.7%
	Total	**350**	**100%**
Educational qualification	School	56	16.0%
	Undergraduate	156	44.6%
	Postgraduate	102	29.1%
	Other	36	10.3%
	Total	**350**	**100%**
Occupation	Student	17	4.9%
	Employed	166	47.4%
	Self-Employed	148	42.3%
	Unemployed	19	5.4%
	Total	**350**	**100%**
Monthly Income	Below ₹20,000	24	6.9%
	₹20,000–₹40,000	33	9.4%
	₹40,000–₹60,000	81	23.1%
	₹60,000–₹80,000	115	32.9%
	Above ₹80,000	97	27.7%
	Total	**350**	**100%**
Frequency of buying cosmetic products online	Rarely	42	12.0%
	Occasionally	34	9.7%
	Frequently	129	36.9%
	Very frequently	145	41.4%
	Total	**350**	**100%**

Source: created by the authors