

Role of Beauty Blogs as a Powerful Marketing Tool – An Empirical Study of Mohali

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Abstract

The cosmetic industry contributes a lot to the economy of our nation. The consumer tries to fetch information on beauty products through print media and internet. There have been countless applications created by marketers to virtually communicate with expected potential consumers in every aspect of modern human life. The internet made the task easy for the consumer so that he can get the need fulfilled at a click, but it has made complex too. The consumer can share his experience and get reviews of others too on any good or services he wishes to choose. The decisions of consumer are not only influenced by his social setup but also by virtual environment. Blogs are one of the major source of information to the consumer, where he actively imbibes new knowledge. Beauty blogs benefit the consumers by enabling them to get reviews and suggestions on beauty products in short time. The aim of research study is to analyze the difference in perception of consumers while considering gender and education as parameters. The respondents were 189 college students in Mohali. From marketer's perspective, this paper addresses the trustworthiness of a blog and its impact on consumer's buying behaviour.

Keywords: *Consumer Perception, Cosmetic Industry, Use of Internet by the consumer, Consumer Buying decision making, Trustworthiness of a blog*

Introduction

“Cosmetics” is word to human race since ages and it's an identified psychological need of every individual. Even Indian men is inspired to use cosmetic products. According to another report, by ASSOCHAM (2016), the business of cosmetic industry was USD2.5 billion in 2016 which is expected to be around USD20 billion by 2025. The selection of beauty product is based on value of money and quality. “Interestingly, men who fall in the age group of 18 to 25, spend more money on grooming and personal care products than women in India,” highlighted in the ASSOCHAM study. According to Statista's Consumer Market Outlook” (CMO), “Revenue in the Cosmetics and Personal Care market amounts to US\$14,443m in 2018. The market is expected to grow annually by 7.1 % (CAGR 2018-2021)”. Marketers are maintaining “Business blogs” and the content of the blog is created by professionals in the company. The organisations aim is to achieve a high level of customer relationship to win a capital gain. The focus of our study is understanding the difference in consumer perception towards blogs with respect to gender and education level.

Literature Review

Blogs are fast and economical technique to collect a large amount of relevant and significant data (Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005)). Marketers can bring great results and long lasting impact on consumer if they focus on blogs as it is hard to reach to the target segment using as traditional marketing tools. Akehurst (2009).As bloggers read the reviews of other bloggers, “need to understand blogs as a new technological phenomenon with implications for marketing and promotion of a product” (Pan et al, 2007, p. 38. Beauty blogs helps the consumer to understand production and consumption of benefits of beauty products (Bosangit, et al., 2009; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2008). Beauty product bloggers express and interact to share personal choices, episodes and stories linked to things, share knowledge, and to get their voice heard by others fetching formation from others, and build up network. (Quinton and Harridge-March, 2010). Marketers can control personal and external factors which are not in his control by reaching to the customer through company's blogs and can provide inputs for consumer's black box before the final decision of consumer (Kotler, 2003) and an expert editor takes care that he doesn't edit the author's voice and that makes expert's blog free from biasness and makes it trustworthy (Indeed, Degeler (2013, p. 62). Consumers considers expert blog as a dependable and influential source of information and many a times develops perception, preferences and positive attitude towards brand and product (Technorati 2013). Hsu et al. (2014) analyzed that the consumer buying behavior is influenced by the suggestions made in the trustworthy blogs. It has been found that males are more active in posting messages than females during discussions (Herring, 1999; McConnell, 1997; Creyer and Ross, 1996) but some researchers contradict to it (Davidson-Shivers, Muilenburg, and Tanner, 2000, 2001; Savicki, Kelley, and Ammon, 2002). Davidson-Shivers, Morris, and Sriwongkol (2003) Females contribute less and are found to be more active in face – to-face discussions than online discussions. (McConnell, 1997).

Objectives of the study

- To find the reasons for consumers visiting “Blogs on Beauty Products”.
- To analyze the influence of “Blogs on Beauty Products” on buying decision making w.r.t. Gender.
- To analyze male & female perception towards “Blogs on Beauty Products”.
- To analyze the influence of “Blogs on Beauty Products” on the buying behavior w.r.t. Level of Education.
- To analyze consumer perception towards the “Blogs on Beauty Products” w.r.t. Level of Education.

Research Methodology

The data was collected using a questionnaire that was distributed to collegiate students in Mohali. Convenience sampling method was used to collect information from 189 respondents pursuing graduation or post-graduation.

Data Interpretation

Table 1 Reasons for consumers visiting “Blogs on Beauty Products”

Reasons for visiting blogs on beauty products	Percentage
Product Quality	53.1
Product Features	63.8
Categories of products	71.8
Services offered with product	71.2
Comparison of products	66.4
Comparison of brands	66.4
Alternatives available	77.6
In search of suggestion	85.1
Review on products	82.9

It was found that respondents visit blogs on beauty products to search information on beauty products. 53.1 % visit to find information on Product Quality, 63.8% on Product Features, 71.8% on for Categories of products, 71.2% for Services offered with product, 66.4% for the Comparison of products, 66.4 % for the Comparison of brands, 77.6 % for Alternatives available, 85.1% in search of suggestion and 82.7% for review on products. (Table 1)

Table 2 . Influence of Blogs on Beauty Products on buying decision making w.r.t. Gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. Do the blogs trigger you to purchase a beauty product?	Between Groups	1.462	1	1.462	6.379	0.012
	Within Groups	42.866	187	0.229		
	Total	44.328	188			
2. Do the blogs influence you to try new brands?	Between Groups	0.028	1	0.028	0.131	0.718
	Within Groups	40.173	187	0.215		
	Total	40.201	188			
3. Do the blogs influence you to try new beauty products or try new services?	Between Groups	0.148	1	0.148	0.726	0.395
	Within Groups	37.99	187	0.203		
	Total	38.138	188			
4. Do you change your attitude towards a beauty brand/product/service after reading positive comments in blogs?	Between Groups	0.007	1	0.007	0.049	0.825
	Within Groups	28.511	187	0.152		
	Total	28.519	188			
5. Do you participate in reader's discussion in blog before buying beauty products?:	Between Groups	0.709	1	0.709	0.391	0.533
	Within Groups	339.428	187	1.815		
	Total	340.138	188			
6. Do you feel less risk is involved after getting information on beauty products through blogs?	Between Groups	1	0.396	0.374	0.542	0.687
	Within Groups	187	1.06			
	Total	188				
7. Does information in blogs help you in buying good quality beauty products	Between Groups	0.004	1	0.004	0.005	0.945
	Within Groups	150.546	187	0.805		
	Total	150.55	188			

There is significance difference between males and females in influence of blogs on beauty products on buying behavior as the blogs trigger respondents to purchase a beauty product(F=6.379,Sig=0.012). But males and females don't differ in trying a new beauty brands(F=0.131,Sig=0.718) or a new beauty product or service(F=0.513,Sig=0.475). Positive comments in blogs change males and females attitude towards a beauty brand/ product/ service(F=0.049,Sig=0.825) and even participate in reader's discussion in blog before buying beauty products(F=0.0.391,Sig=0.533) as they feel less risk in buying product involved after discussion in blogs(F=0.542,Sig=0.687) equally. Both males and females feel information in blogs helps them to buy good quality beauty products(F=0.005,Sig=0.945). Buying behavior of male & females is equally influenced by the blogs on beauty products. (Table 2)

Table 3 : Males and Females perception towards “Blogs on Beauty Products”

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Incomplete information is available in blogs on beauty products.	Between Groups	0.031	1	0.031	0.033	0.856
	Within Groups	173.779	187	0.929		
	Total	173.81	188			
Blogs lack demonstration related to beauty products.	Between Groups	0.172	1	0.172	0.279	0.598
	Within Groups	115.235	187	0.616		
	Total	115.407	188			
Blogs lack sincere opinion related to beauty products.	Between Groups	2.037	1	2.037	2.402	0.123
	Within Groups	158.535	187	0.848		
	Total	160.571	188			
Reviews on beauty products are often confusing in blogs.	Between Groups	0.396	1	0.396	0.474	0.492
	Within Groups	156.249	187	0.836		
	Total	156.646	188			
Blogs on beauty products lacks credibility in terms of expert's opinion.	Between Groups	0.168	1	0.168	0.174	0.677
	Within Groups	179.906	187	0.962		
	Total	180.074	188			
Blogs on beauty products don't give reliable information.	Between Groups	0.064	1	0.064	0.068	0.795
	Within Groups	177.121	187	0.947		
	Total	177.185	188			
Blogs on beauty products are cheaper Source of information in terms of money.	Between Groups	0.023	1	0.023	0.02	0.887
	Within Groups	207.216	187	1.108		
	Total	207.238	188			
Blogs are always updated in information.	Between Groups	2.571	1	2.571	3.022	0.084
	Within Groups	159.091	187	0.851		
	Total	161.661	188			
Suggestions are easily available on beauty products in blogs.	Between Groups	0.086	1	0.086	1.011	0.316
	Within Groups	15.83	187	0.085		
	Total	15.915	188			
Information in blogs help you in buying good quality beauty products.	Between Groups	0.004	1	0.004	0.005	0.945
	Within Groups	150.546	187	0.805		
	Total	150.55	188			
Companies promoting their own products in blogs.	Between Groups	0.5	1	0.5	0.785	0.377
	Within Groups	119.193	187	0.637		
	Total	119.693	188			
You actively participate in reader's discussion in blog on beauty products.	Between Groups	1.102	1	1.102	0.82	0.366
	Within Groups	251.321	187	1.344		
	Total	252.423	188			
You find risk in sharing your own experiences in blog on beauty products.	Between Groups	15.605	1	15.605	10.042	0.002
	Within Groups	290.596	187	1.554		
	Total	306.201	188			

As per result, it shows that there is significance difference in perception towards blogs on beauty products i.e. males and females both equally feel that the information available is incomplete in blogs on beauty products ($F = 0.033$, $Sig.=0.856$), blogs on beauty products lack demonstration ($F=0.279, Sig.=0.598$), sincere opinion on beauty products($F=2.402, Sig.=0.123$). the respondents also perceive that reviews are often confusing in blogs on beauty products ($F = 0.474$, $Sig.=0.492$) and lacks credibility in terms of expert's opinion ($F = 0.174$, $Sig.=0.677$),the information available is not reliable ($F=0.068$, $Sig.=0.795$), cheaper source of information in terms of money ($F=0.02, Sig.=0.887$),the information in blogs isn't updated ($F = 3.022$, $Sig.=0.084$),easy availability of suggestions ($F=1.011, Sig.=0.316$), information in

blogs help to buy better quality of products ($F=0.005, Sig.=0.945$), companies promoting their own beauty products in blogs($F=0.785, Sig.=0.377$), in participating in reader's discussion ($F=0.82, Sig.= 0.366$) but don't differ on risk in sharing your experiences on beauty products through your own blog ($F=10.042, Sig.=0.002$). (Table 3)

Table 4 Influence of Blogs on Beauty Products on the buying behavior w.r.t. Level of Education.

w.r.t. Level of Education.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Information in blogs helps you in buying good quality beauty products.	Between Groups	.963	2	.481	.599	.551
	Within Groups	149.587	186	.804		
	Total	150.550	188			
Blogs trigger you to purchase a beauty product.	Between Groups	.138	2	.069	.290	.749
	Within Groups	44.190	186	.238		
	Total	44.328	188			
Blogs influence you to try new brands of beauty products	Between Groups	.550	2	.275	1.29	.278
	Within Groups	39.651	186	.213		
	Total	40.201	188			
Blogs influence you to try new beauty products or try new services?	Between Groups	.709	2	.354	1.76	.175
	Within Groups	37.429	186	.201		
	Total	38.138	188			
Positive comments in blogs change your attitude towards a beauty brand/product/ service.	Between Groups	.074	2	.037	.242	.785
	Within Groups	28.444	186	.153		
	Total	28.519	188			
You participate in reader's discussion in blog on beauty products.:	Between Groups	2.296	2	1.148	.632	.533
	Within Groups	337.841	186	1.816		
	Total	340.138	188			
You buy a product only when a blog approve it.	Between Groups	2.074	2	1.037	.981	.377
	Within Groups	196.571	186	1.057		
	Total	198.646	188			

There is significance difference in undergraduates and graduates in influence of blogs

There is significance difference in undergraduates and graduates in influence of blogs on beauty products on buying behavior as the blogs trigger respondents to purchase a beauty product (F=0.29, Sig=0.749), the blogs influence respondents to try new beauty brands (F=1.291, Sig=0.278), the blogs influence respondents to try new beauty products or try new services (F=1.762, Sig=0.175), Beauty blogs change respondent's attitude towards a beauty brand/ product/ service after reading positive comments in blogs (F=0.242, Sig=0.785), respondents participate in reader's discussion in blog before buying beauty products (F=0.632, Sig=0.533), respondents buy product only when blogs approve it (F=0.981, Sig=0.377) and information in blogs helps respondents in buying good quality beauty products (F=0.599, Sig=0.551). Buying behavior of respondents is equally influenced by the blogs on beauty products irrespective of their education level. (Table 4)

Table 5: Consumer Perception towards Blogs on Beauty Products w.r.t.Level of Education.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Incomplete information is available in blogs on beauty products.	Between Groups	3.079	2	1.54	1.677	0.19
	Within Groups	170.73	186	0.918		
	Total	173.81	188			
Blogs lack demonstration related to beauty products.	Between Groups	3.884	2	1.942	3.239	0.041
	Within Groups	111.524	186	0.6		
	Total	115.407	188			
Blogs lack sincere opinion related to beauty products.	Between Groups	2.952	2	1.476	1.742	0.178
	Within Groups	157.619	186	0.847		
	Total	160.571	188			
Reviews on beauty products are often confusing in blogs.	Between Groups	3.82	2	1.91	2.325	0.101
	Within Groups	152.825	186	0.822		
	Total	156.646	188			
Blogs on beauty products lacks credibility in terms of expert's opinion.	Between Groups	3.82	2	1.91	2.016	0.136
	Within Groups	176.254	186	0.948		
	Total	180.074	188			
Blogs on beauty products don't give reliable information.	Between Groups	2.995	2	1.497	1.599	0.205
	Within Groups	174.19	186	0.937		
	Total	177.185	188			
Blogs on beauty products are cheaper Source of information in terms of money.	Between Groups	0.889	2	0.444	0.401	0.67
	Within Groups	206.349	186	1.109		
	Total	207.238	188			
Blogs are not always updated in information.	Between Groups	4.011	2	2.005	2.366	0.097
	Within Groups	157.651	186	0.848		
	Total	161.661	188			
Suggestions are easily available on beauty products in blogs.	Between Groups	1.407	2	0.704	0.803	0.45
	Within Groups	163.016	186	0.876		
	Total	164.423	188			
Information in blogs help you in buying good quality beauty products.	Between Groups	0.963	2	0.481	0.599	0.551
	Within Groups	149.587	186	0.804		
	Total	150.55	188			
Companies promoting their own products in blogs.	Between Groups	0.296	2	0.148	0.231	0.794
	Within Groups	119.397	186	0.642		
	Total	119.693	188			
You actively participate in reader's discussion in blog on beauty products.	Between Groups	2.296	2	1.148	0.632	0.533
	Within Groups	337.841	186	1.816		
	Total	340.138	188			
You find risk in sharing your own experiences in blog on beauty products.	Between Groups	0.296	2	0.148	1.764	0.174
	Within Groups	15.619	186	0.084		
	Total	15.915	188			

As per result, it shows that respondents differ significantly in their perception towards blogs on beauty products irrespective of their education level. They all feel that the incomplete information is available in blogs on beauty products ($f=1.677, Sig=0.19$) and blogs on beauty products lack demonstrations($f=3.239, sig=0.061$). Sincere opinion is not given through blogs($f=1.742$)($sig=0.178$) and reviews are often confusing($f=2.325, sig=0.101$). Blogs aren't enough credible blog in terms of expert's opinion($f=2.016, sig=0.136$), lack reliability on information in the blog($f=1.599, sig=0.205$) and updated information available is not available($f=2.366, sig=0.097$). Blogs are cheaper source of information in terms of money($f=0.401, sig=0.67$)and suggestions are available ($f=0.803, sig=0.45$). Companies promoting their own products($f=0.231, sig=0.794$). Respondents find risk in sharing their experiences on beauty products through your own blog($f=0.182, sig=0.834$).(Table 5)

Conclusion

In digital era, Blogs represent freedom of speech. Blogs have created a large number of opportunities for business houses. Blogs can be used to create market visibility and intelligibility usage of information to gain advantage over the competitors. Blogs can help entrepreneurs not only to gives an insight to customer needs & preferences but also enables them to reach to the consumer. Blogs are a vital to marketing infrastructure and can be exploited at the fullest. In our research it has been found that collegiate students are aware of blogs and are regular bloggers irrespective of their level of education,so they can be provided information on time and can be kept updated of latest related cosmetic products. The consumer can be hooked, and brand trust can be cultivated. These students turn to the blogs on beauty for information related to product quality, product features, categories of products, services offered with product, comparison of products, comparison of brands, alternatives available, in search of suggestion and review on products. The marketers should make the blogs on beauty products more interactive with activity-based videos on usage of beauty products. The results of study clearly show that the blogs should post updated, unbiased. and wide range of information and consumer's queries should be timely answered.

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