

The Impact of Opinion Leaders on Consumer Purchasing Intention of Cosmetics Industry in Sri Lanka: Mediating Effect of Brand Trust

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The study aims to analyze the impact of Opinion Leaders on consumer purchasing intention within the cosmetics industry in Sri Lanka. According to Index Box 2021, the cosmetics industry in Sri Lanka has experienced significant growth. Additionally, as noted in the Strategic Audit of Revlon Inc., the expanding cosmetics industry makes a substantial contribution to the global economy. Companies are increasingly utilizing the concept of Opinion Leadership as a marketing strategy to influence consumer purchasing intentions. Drawing on existing literature, this study examines Opinion Leadership through its dimensions of Expertise, Credibility, and Powerfulness in relation to consumer purchase intention. The research adopts a quantitative approach and primarily considers the Two-Step Flow Communication Theory. This theory was tested using an online survey conducted with 388 cosmetic consumers from the Western Province of Sri Lanka, including the Colombo, Gampaha, and Kaluthara districts. A simple random sampling method was employed to select the sample. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS and MS-Excel 2016 software. The results indicate that brand trust significantly mediates the positive relationship between Opinion Leadership and consumer purchasing intention. The findings further demonstrate that the characteristics of Opinion Leaders such as expertise, credibility, and powerfulness positively impact consumer purchase intention. These results contribute to a better understanding of Opinion Leadership's role in shaping consumer purchase intention within Sri Lanka's cosmetics industry.

Keywords: *Brand Trust, Consumer Purchase Intention, Cosmetics, Credibility Expertise, Powerfulness, Two-step Flow Communication Theory*