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# The Influence of Influencer Characteristics on Consumer Purchasing Behavior of Vegan Cosmetics: Focusing on the mediator variable of Attitude

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**Abstract:** This study explores the impact of influencer characteristics on consumer purchasing behavior for vegan cosmetics, focusing on the mediating role of consumer attitudes. In the context of digital commerce, influencers significantly affect purchase intentions through parasocial interactions and trust-building. This research examines how specific influencer traits—such as expertise, reliability, and attractiveness—affect both consumer attitudes towards vegan cosmetics and their subsequent purchasing decisions. Data were collected through a survey of 301 respondents interested in vegan cosmetics in Hebei, China. The analysis, including exploratory factor analysis and regression, reveals that influencer characteristics positively influence attitudes toward vegan cosmetics, which, in turn, mediate the relationship between influencer traits and consumer purchasing behavior. The findings underscore the importance of aligning influencer characteristics with consumer values to optimize marketing strategies in the growing vegan cosmetics market.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Influencer Characteristics, Purchasing Behavior, Vegan Cosmetics

## 1. Introduction

The rise of digital commerce has transformed how consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions, particularly in industries like beauty and personal care. Among the myriad product categories within this sector, vegan cosmetics have garnered increasing attention due to their ethical and environmental appeal. Vegan cosmetics, which are cruelty-free and formulated without animal-derived ingredients, have attracted a growing base of conscientious consumers who prioritize sustainability and animal welfare. As the market for vegan cosmetics expands, brands are increasingly turning to influencer marketing as a strategy to influence consumer attitudes and drive sales. Influencers, who have established trust and credibility within specific communities, are particularly well-suited to endorse vegan products, as they can shape consumer perceptions and behaviors (Freberg et al., 2011; Lee & Watkins, 2016).

While much research has focused on the general effectiveness of influencer marketing, there is still limited insight into how specific characteristics of influencers—such as their expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—impact consumer purchasing behavior, especially in the context of niche products like vegan cosmetics. Previous studies have shown that an influencer's personal attributes can significantly influence the attitudes of consumers, which in turn shape their purchasing

decisions (Chung & Cho, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, the precise mechanisms through which these characteristics affect consumer behavior remain underexplored. Understanding how these traits influence consumer attitudes and how attitudes mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and actual purchasing behavior is essential for optimizing influencer marketing strategies, particularly in emerging markets like vegan cosmetics. The role of consumer attitude as a mediator in the influencer-consumer relationship is a key focus in this research. Attitude, defined as a consumer's positive or negative evaluation of a product, has been widely recognized as a critical determinant of purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991). Influencer marketing, with its ability to create parasocial interactions between influencers and followers, offers a unique avenue through which attitudes toward products can be shaped. Previous studies have suggested that influencer characteristics, such as credibility, expertise, and attractiveness, influence consumers' attitudes toward products, which in turn, impacts their purchasing decisions (Ohanian, 1990; McCracken, 1989). However, the influence of these characteristics in the context of vegan cosmetics has yet to be sufficiently investigated.

This study explores how influencer characteristics impact consumer attitudes toward vegan cosmetics and how these attitudes influence purchasing behavior. By focusing on the ethical and environmental aspects of vegan cosmetics, it aims to provide insights into the role of influencer marketing in enhancing consumer engagement and driving sales in niche markets. The research will offer valuable guidance for marketers on how to align influencer traits with consumer values to build trust and increase sales in the growing vegan cosmetics market.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Influencer Characteristics**

The growing popularity of vegan cosmetics has been driven by a combination of influencer impact, shifting consumer values, and evolving sociocultural trends. Influencers in the beauty industry, particularly top vegan beauty advocates in the United States, have played a crucial role in shaping the future of cruelty-free and plant-based cosmetics by engaging with eco-conscious consumers and promoting ethical beauty choices (Le, 2019). The influence of TikTok content creators on Generation Z and the broader cosmetics industry has further underscored the significance of cruelty-free practices and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) considerations in shaping consumer preferences (Dos Santos et al., 2023). The rise of the clean beauty movement among Millennials and Generation Z has reinforced the demand for cruelty-free cosmetics, significantly impacting brand loyalty and purchasing behavior (Sim & Jaimon, 2022). Sociocultural developments in the 2010s and 2020s have also contributed to the mainstream adoption of vegan beauty products, with the increasing popularity of vegetarianism fostering greater interest in ethical and sustainable beauty choices (In-Young, 2023). The role of digital platforms and social media has further amplified this trend, as influencers actively promote vegan cosmetics to their followers, shaping purchasing decisions and increasing awareness of cruelty-free alternatives (Amalia & Darmawan, 2023).

From a consumer perspective, purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by ethical considerations, such as environmental concerns, perceived consumer efficacy, and product attributes. Studies indicate that consumers prefer cruelty-free products due to their alignment with sustainability

values and personal ethical beliefs (Robu et al., 2021). Moreover, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifts in consumption values—particularly among the MZ generation—have reinforced the importance of ingredient transparency, with an emphasis on high-quality, natural ingredients extending from food products to cosmetics (Lee & Kwon, 2022).

## **2.2 Consumer Purchasing Behavior**

Consumer purchasing behavior has been extensively studied in marketing, with scholars defining it as a process involving decision-making before, during, and after a purchase. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) emphasized its comprehensive nature, while Toha and Supriyanto (2023) highlighted cognitive and emotional aspects. Umberson et al. (2010) further expanded the concept to include social and organizational influences. Key determinants of consumer purchasing behavior include knowledge, brand image, involvement, and ethical considerations. Liao et al. (2012) used data mining to analyze purchasing patterns, while Ahuja et al. (2003) identified trust, perceived risk, and convenience as critical factors in online shopping. García-Salirrosas and Rondon-Eusebio (2022) found that green marketing strategies, such as eco-labeling and CSR initiatives, significantly influence consumer choices. Fakhreddin and Foroudi (2022) explored the impact of Instagram influencers, showing that credibility, engagement, and social proof drive purchasing decisions. This study aims to explore consumer purchasing behavior by examining the key factors that influence purchasing decisions in the cosmetics industry.

## **2.3 Attitude toward Vegan Cosmetics**

Veganism reflects a shift in attitudes toward the environment, food, and health, representing a transition from a traditional way of life to one that is healthier, more ethical, and more natural (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Adopting a vegan lifestyle involves avoiding animal products and those tested on animals, such as cosmetics and detergents (Son & Bulut, 2016). Given the growing interest in veganism, understanding consumer attitudes and behaviors toward vegan products is essential for clarifying their decision-making processes (Ajzen, 1991).

Consumer attitudes play a crucial role in shaping behavior and directly influence purchasing decisions (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, analyzing these attitudes and behaviors is key to effectively engaging with markets and customers. The “attitude toward behavior” theory provides a framework for explaining consumer decision-making and behavior, highlighting how consumers’ evaluations of a product’s attributes shape their thoughts and (Ghazali et al., 2023). Ultimately, attitudes significantly impact consumers’ final purchase decisions, underscoring their importance in understanding consumer behavior.

### 3. Methodology and Procedures

#### 3.1 Research Method

This study examines how influencer characteristics impact consumer purchasing behavior of vegan cosmetics, with attitude serving as a mediator variable. The proposed model includes the following components:

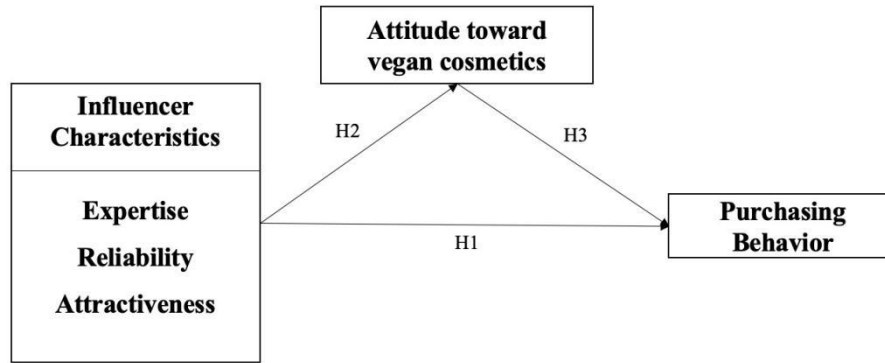


Figure 1.1. Research Model

#### 3.2 Research hypothesis

This study aims to examine the influence of influencer characteristics on consumer purchasing behavior regarding vegan cosmetics, with a particular focus on the mediating role of consumer attitudes.

H1: Influencer characteristics will have a positive impact on purchasing behavior.

H1-1: Expertise will have a positive impact on purchasing behavior.

H1-2: Reliability will have a positive impact on purchasing behavior.

H1-3: Attractiveness will have a positive impact on purchasing behavior.

H2: Influencer characteristics will have a positive impact on attitudes toward vegan cosmetics.

H2-1: Expertise will have a positive impact on attitudes toward vegan cosmetics.

H2-2: Reliability will have a positive impact on attitudes toward vegan cosmetics.

H2-3: Attractiveness will have a positive impact on attitudes toward vegan cosmetics.

H3: Attitudes toward vegan cosmetics will mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchasing behavior.

#### 3.3 Research Method

This study collected data through a self-administered survey targeting individuals interested in vegan cosmetics in Hebei Province, China, using convenience sampling. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed between January 7 and January 21, 2025, and after excluding 19 incomplete or insincere responses, 301 valid questionnaires were retained for final analysis.

The collected data underwent coding and cleaning procedures before being analyzed using SPSS v. 26.0. First, frequency analysis was conducted to examine the general characteristics of the respondents. To ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement tools, exploratory factor

analysis (EFA) was performed, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was calculated. Descriptive statistical analysis was then applied to assess the normality of the variables. Following this, correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between influencer characteristics, consumer purchasing behavior, and attitudes. Finally, to verify whether attitudes toward vegan cosmetics mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchasing behavior, linear regression analysis was conducted. Additionally, the Sobel test was performed to confirm the significance of the mediating effect.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

The demographic profile indicates that the sample is slightly skewed toward married individuals, representing 59.8% of respondents, which may reflect the age distribution, as older age groups (e.g., 30s and above) are more likely to be married. Marital status could influence purchasing behavior, as married individuals may have different priorities or financial responsibilities compared to unmarried respondents. Overall, the sample is primarily composed of younger to middle-aged (20s–40s), highly educated (bachelor's degree or higher), middle-income (¥5,000–¥20,000) women, with significant representation from office workers and students. This profile underscores the potential influence of family-related factors and provides valuable insights for tailoring marketing strategies and product development to this target demographic.

Table 4. 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	185	61.5
	Male	116	38.5
Age	20s	120	39.87
	30s	95	31.56
	40s	60	19.93
	Above 50s	26	8.63
Education	High school graduate or below	50	16.6%
	Associate degree	80	26.6%
	Bachelor's degree	120	39.9%
	Master's degree or above	51	16.9%

Occupation	Student	70	23.3%
	Office worker	90	29.9%
	Professional	40	13.3%
	Self-employed	30	10.0%
	Technical job	20	6.6%
	Homemaker	51	16.9%
Income	Below ¥5,000	60	19.9%
	¥5,000–¥10,000	100	33.2%
	¥10,000–¥20,000	90	29.9%
	Above ¥20,000	51	16.9%
Marital Status	Married	180	59.8%
	Unmarried	121	40.2%

#### 4.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) indicate that the model for vegan cosmetics demonstrates strong validity and reliability, as shown by favorable fit indices:  $\chi^2 = 125.67$ ,  $DF = 84$ ,  $CMIN/DF = 1.496$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $AGFI = .912$ ,  $GFI = .934$ ,  $TLI = .956$ ,  $IFI = .963$ ,  $CFI = .962$ ,  $RMR = .042$ , and  $RMSEA = .045$ . The model effectively captures the impact of influencer characteristics, consumer attitudes, and past purchasing behavior on decision-making. Additionally, the high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.8$ ) further confirms the reliability of the findings. These results highlight the significant role of ethical and environmental concerns, as well as consumer trust in influencers, in shaping purchasing behavior.

Table 4. 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Results

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Std	Cronbach's
The influencer has extensive knowledge about vegan cosmetics.	.855	.312	.238	.728	.863
The influencer prioritizes consumer interests over advertisements.	.789	.297	.315	.542	
The influencer presents a positive image of using vegan cosmetics.	.721	.468	.296	.618	

I believe vegan cosmetics are more ethical than regular cosmetics.	.332	.842	.207	.756	.836
I think using vegan cosmetics contributes to environmental protection.	.293	.812	.099	.621	
My overall perception of vegan cosmetics is positive.	.322	.0798	.012	.532	
I consider purchasing vegan cosmetics to be a valuable choice.	.375	.698	.335	.621	
I have purchased vegan cosmetics before.	-.011	-.019	.879	.812	.881
I intend to continue purchasing vegan cosmetics in the future.	.287	.273	.832	.789	
I have bought vegan cosmetics based on an influencer's recommendation.	.315	.108	.765	.721	
I consider an influencer's opinion when selecting vegan cosmetics.	.335	.081	.732	.698	

$\chi^2=125.67$ ,  $DF=84$ ,  $CMIN/DF=1.496$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $AGFI=.912$ ,  $GFI=.934$ ,  $TLI=.956$ ,  $IFI=.963$ ,  $CFI=.962$ ,  $RMR=.042$ ,  $RMSEA=.045$

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix shows strong relationships between expertise, reliability, attractiveness, purchasing behavior, and attitudes. Expertise has a strong correlation with reliability (0.824) and attitudes (0.883), significantly influencing purchasing behavior (0.752). Attractiveness positively affects both purchasing behavior (0.785) and attitudes (0.804). Reliability has a moderate impact on purchasing behavior (0.680) and attitudes (0.715), while purchasing behavior is strongly driven by attitudes (0.892). Expertise is the most influential factor in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions, with reliability and attractiveness also playing important roles.

Table 4. 3: Correlation Analysis Results

Items	Expertise	Reliability	Attractiveness	Purchasing Behavior	Attitudes
Expertise	1				
Reliability	.824***	1			
Attractiveness	.807**	.828**	1		
Purchasing Behavior	.752**	.680**	.785***	1	
Attitudes	.883**	.715***	.804**	.892***	1

\*  $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$

#### 4.4 Hypotheses Testing

The findings for Hypothesis 1 (H1) robustly confirm that influencer characteristics exert a statistically significant and positive influence on purchasing behavior ( $\beta = 0.589$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.362$ ), underscoring the pivotal role of influencers in consumer decision-making processes. Among the examined traits, Expertise (H1-1) emerges as the most impactful predictor ( $\beta = 0.512$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), aligning with theoretical expectations that perceived knowledgeability enhances credibility and trust. Reliability (H1-2) demonstrates a moderate yet significant effect ( $\beta = 0.218$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reinforcing the importance of consistency and trustworthiness in swaying purchase intentions. While Attractiveness (H1-3) also contributes ( $\beta = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), its comparatively weaker effect suggests that aesthetic appeal plays a secondary role relative to expertise. The model exhibits strong explanatory power (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.415$ ,  $F = 15.101$ ), though the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.375) hints at potential autocorrelation, warranting diagnostic scrutiny in future studies to ensure robustness. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Table 4. 4: Hypothesis 1 Results

H1	Standardized coefcient		Non-standardized coefcient	t	p
Model	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$		
Expertise	0.512	0.056	0.334	5.178	0.000
Reliability	0.218	0.072	0.292	0.601	0.000
Attractiveness	0.252	0.025	0.195	0.219	0.000
	$R^2 = 0.442$ , adj $R^2 = 0.415$ , $F=15.101$ , Durin-Watson=1.375 Dependent variable: Purchasing Behavior				

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

The results for Hypothesis 2 (H2) demonstrate a statistically significant and positive relationship between influencer characteristics and attitudes toward vegan cosmetics ( $\beta = 0.684$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.387$ ), confirming influencers' ability to shape consumer perceptions in this niche market. Among the examined traits, Expertise (H2-1) exerts the strongest influence ( $\beta = 0.193$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reflecting consumers' reliance on knowledgeable sources when evaluating specialized products like vegan cosmetics. Reliability (H2-2) shows a smaller but still significant effect ( $\beta = 0.135$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that while trustworthiness contributes to attitude formation, its impact is secondary to expertise. Similarly, Attractiveness (H2-3) has a modest yet meaningful effect ( $\beta = 0.186$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that aesthetic appeal plays a role, albeit less pronounced than expertise. The model demonstrates good explanatory power (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.395$ ,  $F = 13.652$ ), though the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.125) signals potential autocorrelation, which may require further investigation to ensure model robustness. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was accepted.



Table 4. 5: Hypothesis 2 Results

H2	Standardized coefcient		Non-standardized coefcient	t	p
Model	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$		
Expertise	.193	.062	.239	.175	0.000
Reliability	.135	.092	.275	.125	0.000
Attractiveness	.186	.172	.298	.162	0.000
	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.419 , adj R <sup>2</sup> = 0.395,F=13.652, Durin-Watson=1.125				
	Dependent variable: Attitudes				

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

This research conducted a Sobel test to examine the mediating variable and confirm its significance. The mediation analysis for Hypothesis 3 provides robust empirical evidence supporting the partial mediation of attitudes in the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchasing behavior, following Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal steps approach. The results reveal that influencer characteristics exert a strong direct effect on purchasing behavior ( $\beta = 0.589$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Step 1) while simultaneously demonstrating significant predictive power on attitudes toward vegan cosmetics ( $\beta = 0.684$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Step 2). Crucially, when attitudes are introduced as a mediator (Step 3), the direct effect of influencer characteristics diminishes ( $\beta = 0.435$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while maintaining statistical significance, accompanied by a significant indirect effect through attitudes ( $\beta = 0.395$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This partial mediation is further substantiated by the enhanced explanatory power of the model ( $R^2$  increases from 0.362 to 0.468), indicating that approximately 26.1% of the total effect is mediated through attitudinal pathways. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Table 4. 6: Hypothesis 3 Results

Step	Independent variable	Dependent variable	$\beta$	t	R <sup>2</sup>	F
1	Influencer characteristics	Purchasing Behavior	.589	12.795***	.362	175.014***
2	Influencer characteristics	Attitudes	.684	13.529***	.387	172.951***
3	Influencer characteristics	Purchasing Behavior	.435	7.895***	.468	125.913***
	Attitudes		.395	6.315***		

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

The hypotheses testing results show that influencer characteristics, including expertise, reliability, and attractiveness, significantly impact both purchasing behavior and attitudes toward vegan cosmetics. All hypotheses (H1-1, H1-2, H1-3, H2-1, H2-2, H2-3) are accepted, with significant

positive relationships found for each factor. Additionally, attitudes mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchasing behavior (H3). Overall, influencer characteristics play a key role in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

This study investigates how influencer characteristics—specifically expertise, reliability, and attractiveness—affect consumer attitudes toward vegan cosmetics, which in turn influence purchasing behavior. Expertise was found to be the most impactful factor in shaping both attitudes and purchasing decisions, followed by attractiveness and reliability, though these had slightly lesser effects. The findings emphasize the importance of aligning influencer traits with consumer values, especially in niche markets like vegan cosmetics, where sustainability and cruelty-free practices are critical. Consumer attitudes play a key role as mediators, with positive perceptions of influencers strongly increasing the likelihood of purchase, highlighting influencer marketing's effectiveness in promoting vegan products.

However, the study has some limitations. The sample was limited to a specific geographic region (Hebei Province, China), which may affect the broader applicability of the findings, and self-reported survey data could introduce biases. Future research should expand the geographic scope to explore cross-cultural differences and include additional influencer characteristics such as likeability or authenticity for a more comprehensive understanding. Longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impact of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and consumer behavior, especially in relation to evolving societal values. Moreover, cross-cultural studies would help tailor marketing efforts to diverse demographic groups, providing insights into the global applicability of influencer marketing strategies.

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