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MICROCELEBRITIES: THE NEW CELEBRITIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Revathi Suresh Nair

Introduction

Traditionally, celebrities endorsed products in the 20th century but now with the dawn of social media, a new breed of celebrities i.e. Digital Influencers (i.e., Internet Microcelebrities—non-traditional celebrities—are those who narrate their personal lives and lifestyles and endorse brand, products and/ or services in their blog or social media posts)((D Jimenez- Castillo, 49(2019)) have come up. The study focuses on whether digital influencers influence their followers to buy the brands or products they endorse on their account, website, page, etc. and whether it leads to brand engagement and perception of people about the brand. As their social media marketing strategies, many companies hire or pay digital influencers to endorse their brand or product on their social media handles. This results in their ardent followers to get influenced and buy the products resulting in people trying it up.

Celebrities have an impact when it is about advertising products (Van Norel, 2018). Approaching a celebrity to endorse a product, positively affects consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intention (Schlecht, 2003). The reason for celebrity endorsement is to enhance value to a brand name and the product or service being offered. According to (Keller, 2005), advertising through a celebrity is useful in building brand equity. But finding a right fit is an intimidating task,

as an improper celebrity endorser may or may not benefit the company. With the dawn of Social Media and considering the growth of these platforms. There were 500 million active Internet Users in early 2019 and according to Statista, currently the number is at 560 million users. Only 17% of total Indian Population could access the internet in 2015.

There seems to be a budding interest among marketers to experiment with Social Media platforms for endorsing due to its large reach among mobile phone users worldwide, with users in India itself. Several researchers have argued that information is extra reliable when it is delivered by a product reviewer/blogger as opposed to an established celebrity (Camahort, 2016). These internet microcelebrities are perceived to be more reliable and credible, believable and authentic by their followers.

Disparity in the level of digitalization is a crucial driver of economic inequality in an economy. Although a pocket of its population is still bereft of the benefits of digitalization, India currently has the second highest number of internet subscribers in the world despite the nation's late adoption of digital technology. The factors responsible for the digitalization divide across states were identified (Subhasis Bera, 2019). In an emerging country such as India, consumers are tech savvy and

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connect easily with digital media platforms. They use these platforms even for luxury purchases.These consumers are always connected to reference groups digitally who significantly affect their purchase behavior and subsequent brand choices (Varsha Jain et al, 2019).

The study is being done to find the influence of Internet Microcelebrities and the power they have over their followers to make them purchase the brand they recommend. The study will help brands who look forward to establish themselves in the Indian Market. There have been numerous research studies related to the amount of influence that celebrity endorsements have on purchase intention and brand value. Traditional advertisements had celebrities endorse brands and products but now that people spend the vast majority of their time on their mobile phones especially on Social Media, it has become a platform where brands can tie-up with a new breed of celebrities- Internet Microcelebrities and increase their reach to an extensive audience. Hence this study would help to find out how effective the eWOM of such digital influencers can be. The study would also determine the mediating effect of brand engagement in self-concept and brand expected value on the effect of perceived influence of micro celebrities on purchase intention.

Theoretical Framework

Digital opinion Leaders

The consumer's involvement with the brand on its social media page will be influenced by the brand familiarity and information quality. Social media content has greater influence on consumer's involvement with the social media page. Involvement with a brand's social media led to a

positive attitude towards the brand's social media page, which in turn influences future purchase intention from the brand (Clair McClure et al, 2020). The cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement with luxury brands are grouped into 6 macro dimensions and 13 motivations (Saleh Bazi et al, 2020). Despite the current prevalence and relevance of social media communication as a loyalty-building factor in a context as competitive as the tourism sector, relatively little literature has addressed it in emerging tourist destination scenarios. Hence, the present paper presents an analysis of how – and to what extent – social media communication, both controlled and uncontrolled by the destination organization, has an impact on destination brand equity and destination brand engagement (Rocío Huerta-Álvarez, 2020). This study aims to contribute to existing social media research by proposing and empirically testing a model in which social media brand involvement and social media brand communication are the main precursors and brand relationship quality is a relevant outcome of social media brand engagement. The findings show that the influence of social media brand involvement on social media brand engagement is stronger than the influence of social media brand communication. The latter is due to the co-creation of users and firms (Mar Gómez et al, 2019).

In social media marketing, celebrity endorsement is a widely used strategy. Luxury brands use their social media accounts to post pictures of celebrities using their products. However, they would be confronted with the dilemma of whether to standardize or localize their celebrity endorsers for different markets. The results suggest that

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localized (vs. standardized) celebrity endorsements lead to more social media interactions. Using localized (standardized) celebrity endorsements enhance the perceived brand luxury for people with high (low) patriotism (Shubin Yu et al, 2020). The perceived influential power of digital influencers not only helps to generate engagement but also increases expected value and behavioral intention regarding the recommended brands. Moreover, brand engagement in self-concept raises brand expected value and both variables also affect the intention to purchase recommended brands (David Jiménez-Castillo, 2019) SMI persona- and content-driven attributes, that make followers feel attached to SMIs (Chung-Wha (Chloe) Ki et al, 2020). Corporate brands should respond to crises through a bolstering strategy promoting existing corporate goodwill, without the influencer's involvement. When leveraging influencers' support, however, brands should endeavor to inoculate against manipulative inferences by communicating values-driven motives behind the brand-influencer partnership (Jaywant Singh, 2020) digital celebrities have an advertising influence on their SNS followers with the concept of parasocial relationships (Kumju Hwang et al, 2018). propose a model which traces the influencer role of bloggers from the two-step flow theory perspective (Ebru Uzunoğlu et al, 2014) only a minority of Latin American and European professionals use specific strategies to identify and engage with SMIs. Practitioners prefer traditional identification of Social media influencers using indicators such as personal reputation, the relevance of topics covered, and the quality of the content shared online (Cristina Navarro et al, 2020).

Two-step flow communication theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) and observational learning theory (Bandura, 1977) clearly link to explain actual personal influence or opinion leadership within social networks. Consistent with the two-step flow theory, opinion leaders such as digital influencers act as intermediaries of the information they seek or receive and, once they have developed and filtered it, distribute it in the form of a message to other people via WOM, thus increasing the potential influence on them (Bao & Chang, 2014; Magno, 2017; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

Media Dependency Theory

Media dependency theory represents a framework to understand the complex relationships among people, the media, and other social systems. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) originally conceptualized the theory for application to multiple levels of analysis. The macro level is concerned with structural dependency relations between audiences, the mass media, and other social institutions. At this level, the theory proposes that people will rely more on the mass media for information under conditions of uncertainty and societal disruptions, such as during natural disasters or political crises. At the micro level of analysis, media dependency has an asymmetrical effect in which the attainment of the goals and needs of individuals is contingent on the information resources controlled by social and media institutions (Ball-Rokeach, 1985)At a micro-level of analysis, this theory suggests that the dependency will be greater when the medium or source of information provides resources that are

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relevant to the achievement of personal and social goals and the satisfaction of the individual's needs (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984;). media system dependency theory to explore how informational media use was associated with two dimensions of environmentalism: the willingness to pay for environmental protection, and environmental citizenship (participating in pro-environmental activities). It also examines how this association varies across structural-level environmental, technological, and political factors. The effects of informational media usage at individual level on environmentalism were further moderated by country-level factors. Information media use casted greater impacts on environmentalism when the information and communication infrastructure was better developed, or where the real-world environmental situation was worse (Xinzhi Zhang et al, 2020).

Model and Hypotheses

McCracken has proposed a meaning transfer model which states that firstly an endorsers' credibility and expertise transfer meaning to his/her public image and then the endorser transfers the meaning to the brand being endorsed and lastly, the meaning is transferred to the end consumer (McCracken, 1989).The aim of this study is to find how effective Influencer Marketing is in India. With the arrival of Social Media networks and platforms globally, new opportunities of growth and selling are coming up. In today's world it has become more and more important for companies to promote their products via social media platforms so that they reach the target audience, increase the word-of-mouth for

their products and achieve their desired sales target. (Bao, 2014)

Social media platforms are playing an extensively major role in the daily lives of people as people increasingly look at them and the interactions that people have, have become virtual. People are increasingly looking at social media applications as a significant part of their daily life and are more likely to shift their interactions to the virtual platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter). This, in turn, positively reproduce on their orientations and behaviors toward different kinds of social media technology (Alalwan, 2016).This article demonstrates that eWOM of opinion leaders is what drives product sales owing to their product experience and knowledge background. Our findings suggest that companies can increase product sales by the effective use of eWOM of such opinion leaders (Bao, 2014). These methods allow firms to involve in collaborative processes of product-related information sharing with their customers as well as influencers in order to endorse their brand and products to their followers.

In order to launch an actual marketing communications campaign through eWOM, the company has to approach a digital influencer who would exert their personal influence on their followers (E.M. Rogers, 1962).

The online purchase intention depends on perceived value and trust. Perceived trust can be predicted by perceived information quality and perceived security. Perceived security depends on the vendor reputation, third-party assurance seals, security and privacy policies, website familiarity

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and disposition towards third-party certification, etc. (Enrique Bonsón Ponte, 2015)

With media getting more complex and people creating content every minute of the day, the lines between "influence" and what "looks-like-influence" have been blurred (Hall, 2017). The word Perceived means what you sense is true through instincts but it is not actually supported by facts. Perceived Influence is sensing that someone, in this case, the Internet Microcelebrities have influenced you.

The assumption was that higher the consumer satisfaction, higher the consumer loyalty. Over time, it turned out that, mere satisfaction will not make it clear whether the case is of repeat purchase or actual loyalty (Amine, 1998).

Researchers have analyzed the extent of including Brand as part of self-concept.

The Oxford Dictionary defines self-concept as "An idea of the self-constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others". Brand Engagement in Self-Concept describes the likelihood of the consumer to include vital brands as a part of one's own self-concept. (Flynn, Vol. 3 Issue 2, 2011)

The consumer develops a passion and engagement with the brand. It is expected that even considering to include brands as part of self-concept, will sense a higher Brand Expected Value in the customers mind (Sprott, 46 (1) 2009).

Observational learning theory states that individuals develop their attitudinal and behavioral consumer patterns as a result of their interactions and learning from external socialization agents (Keaveney, 2001) such as friends, peers or mass media.

H1: Followers who perceive higher influential power from digital influencers will form more brand engagement in self-concept.

The opinions, behaviors and decisions of fellow individuals leads to forming expectations (Zeithaml, 1993) which leads to generation of professed value by the user (Al-Debei, 2014). Evidences previously have suggested that the information from different sources has a significant or a positive response on individuals and the value perceived by them regarding a product or service (Al-Debei, 2014).

H2: Followers who perceive higher influential power from digital influencers will form higher brand expected value.

Previous researches and study show that effect of members in the social of an individual from external sources has a substantial impact on a consumer's behavior (Bao, 2014). The perceived quality of content and credibility and the influence of these internet microcelebrities spread via eWOM are said to generate an intention to purchase (Cosenza, 2014). In fact, many studies have verified the influence that these micro celebrities/opinion leaders have on purchase intention if the recommended brands (Sweeney, 2014). So greater the persuasive power of the internet microcelebrities, greater the consumers' intention to purchase.

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H3: Followers who perceive higher influential power from digital influencers will have a. greater intention to purchase recommended brands.

It is found that there is a co-creation of value when an interaction is established with the opinion leaders online (del Águila-Obra, 2007 27 (3)) through which the consumer develops an engagement with the brand leading to a perception of the brand value. When the follower feels immersion with the brand leading to including the brand as part of their self-concept, it ends up leading to a greater brand value (Sprott, 46 (1) 2009). Moreover, it is expected that people who develop an engagement with the brand as part of their self-concept will have high expectations of brand value.

H4: Follower brand engagement in self-concept will positively predict the brand expected value

Studies like (Dwivedi, 2015) have stated how engagement with a brand leads to consumer behavior. If there is high attachment and commitment and loyalty towards a brand, it will lead to purchase intention. (Sprott, 46 (1) 2009) says that if brand engagement in self-concept is high, chances of purchase are more.

H5: Follower brand engagement in self-concept will positively predict the intention to purchase recommended brands.

The main indicator of purchase intention is perceived value (Cronin, 2000). Studies have found that greater the perceived value of the brand, greater the purchase and repurchase intention.

H6: Follower brand expected value will positively predict the intention to purchase recommended brands.

As studies have stated that more the influential power of an individual, more will be the brand engagement and greater the brand engagement, greater will be the intention to purchase. This hypothesis, will be testing the mediating effect of brand engagement in self-concept.

H7: Follower brand engagement in self-concept will positively mediate the relationship between perceived influence and intention to purchase recommended brands.

More the perceived value, more the purchase intention. This hypothesis will be testing the role of this perceived value as a mediator between, perceived influence and purchase intention.

H8: Follower brand expected value will positively mediate the relationship between perceived influence and intention to purchase recommended brands.
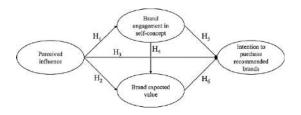
As studies like (Brodie, 2013 (66)1) have confirmed the engagement to value relationship. And studies like (Al-Debei, 2014) that have suggested that the information from different sources has a significant or a positive response on individuals and the value perceived by them regarding a product or service leads us to test this

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hypothesis which is taking brand engagement in self-concept as the mediating variable between perceived influence and brand expected value.

H9: Follower brand engagement in self-concept and brand expected value will positively mediate the relationship between perceived influence and intention to purchase recommended brands..

Research Context and Data Collection

The world economic forum report has predicted that Indian consumer market which is presently $1.5 trillion will expand to $ 6 trillion by 2030. Also, India will be the third largest consumer market behind U.S and China. The digital influencers are influencing digital shoppers to the products they endorse. There is a consumer connect when a friendly face recommends the product rather than a celebrity endorsing the product. The brands are set to spend up to $15 Billion on influencer marketing. (Indian Express, 2019). The campaign India report revealed that the largest percentage of influencers were from the metro cities Delhi and Mumbai. The study also showed that lifestyle and fashion is the number one category, followed by beauty and travel and other popular categories include food, parenting and entertainment. The industries which mostly use influencer marketing are e-commerce,

mobile apps and retail. The micro celebrities who gained prominence during the pandemic were from fitness, cooking, mental health and gaming space (Campaign India, 2020).

The survey respondents were more than 18 years of age and were followers of digital influencers (i.e. Micro celebrities or non-traditional celebrities who narrate their personal lives and lifestyle. They also, endorse brands, products and/ or services). The population for this research cannot be listed and hence a non-random sampling method was used for selecting the sample. The initial sample respondents were selected based on the contacts of the researcher and then the contacts of the initial respondents were used. Hence, snowball sampling technique was used for selecting the sample. The data was collected in the form of a structured questionnaire through Google Forms and 217 responses were collected, out of which the people who weren't following any digital influencer had to be removed. Hence, the final sample size was 205. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents. The sample consisted of 52% females, 51% were in the age group 18 to 23 and 40 % in the age group 24 to 29. Majority of them were post graduates and were students. The micro celebrities who were mostly followed by the respondents were Karikku, EatKochiEat and BhuvanBam in that order. The Social Media platforms which were mostly used by the respondents were Youtube, Instagram and Facebook in that order.

Measures

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In order to measure the constructs in the proposed model, the scale developed by David and Raquel (2019) was used. The scale contained 4 constructs namely perceived influence, brand engagement in self-concept, brand expected value and purchase intention. The construct perceived influence was measured using 3 items, the construct brand engagement in self-concept was measured using 4 items, the construct brand expected value was measured using 4 items and purchase intention was measured using 3 items. Hence a scale with validity check undertaken by the author was used for the study.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the sample	
Demographics	**Frequency (%)**
Gender	
Male	98(47.8)
Female	107(52.2)
Age	
18-23	105(51.2)
24-29	82(40)
30-35	7(3.4)
36-41	11(5.4)
Qualification	
Intermediate	11(5.4)
Graduate	81(39.5)
Post Graduate	113(55.1)
Occupation	
Student	139(67.8)
Employed	50(24.4)
Self-employed	9(4.4)
Homemaker	7(3.4)

Results

Scale Reliability

The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability of the various constructs namely perceived influence, brand engagement in self-concept brand expected value and purchase intention, as shown in Table 2 are 0.825, 0.880, 0.890 and 0.882 respectively.

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Table 2

Scale Reliability

Variables and items	Reliability
Perceived Influence(PerInf)	0.825.
My perceptions often change when I receive information from the influencers that I follow (PerInf1)	
I value the opinion of the influencers that I follow as if they were someone close whom I trust (PerInf2)	
The influencers that I follow suggest helpful products or brands to me (PerInf3)	
Brand Engagement in Self-Concept (BESC)	0.880
I often feel a personal connection between the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow and myself (BESC1)	
Part of me is defined by the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow (BESC2)	
I feel as if a have a close personal connection with the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow (BESC3)	
There are links between the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow and how I view myself (BESC4)	
Brand Expected Value (BEV)	0.890
I think that the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow have an acceptable standard of quality (BEV1)	
In my opinion, the products of the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow are well made (BEV2)	
The brands suggested by the influencers that I follow seem attractive to me (BEV3)	
I positively value the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow (BEV4)	
Intention to purchase recommended brands (PurInt)	0.882
I would purchase a brand based on the advice I am given by the influencers that I follow (PurInt1)	
I would follow brand recommendations from the influencers that I follow (PurInt2)	
In the future, I will purchase the products of brands recommended by the influencers that I follow (PurInt3)	

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Descriptive Statistics

Table 3

Descriptive statistics

Statistics

		Perceived Influence	Brand Engagement in self-concept	Brand Expected Value	Purchase Intention
N	Valid	205	205	205	205
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.25	2.93	3.37	3.21
Median		3.33	3.00	3.50	3.33
Std. Deviation		.859	.928	.841	.916
Minimum		1	1	1	1
Maximum		5	5	5	5

All variables shown in Table 3 have been measured using a five-point Likert Scale. The mean value of the variables lies in the range of 2.5 to 3.5 and said to be the in Medium-level. The median lies in 3 to 3.5 range.

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5.3 Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesized results were obtained using the Structural Equation analysis. The goodness-of- fit statistics showed that the model fit was satisfactory (CMIN/DF = 2.182, GFI = 0.899, RMSEA= 0.076, CFI = 0.959). The results are shown in Table 4 and Fig:1.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Standardized Parameter Estimates	Unstandardized Parameter estimates	t-value	p- value	Results
H1 (PerInf-BESC)	0.081	0.805	9.906	0.000	Accepted
H2 (PerInf-BEV)	0.111	0.521	4.710	0.000	Accepted
H3 (PerInf-PurInt)	0.194	0.557	2.867	0.004	Accepted
H4 (BESC-BEV)	0.109	0.336	3.096	0.002	Accepted
H5 (BESC-PurInt)	0.145	0.067	0.464	0.642	Rejected
H6 (BEV-PurInt)	0.210	0.356	1.695	0.090	Rejected

The table 4 shows that the relation between perceived influence and brand engagement in self-concept is significant as the value obtained is 0.000. This means that perceived influence has an influence on brand engagement in self-concept. Hence, Hypotheses 1 (H1) is true and it is accepted at the 5% level. Similarly, the relation between perceived influence and brand expected value is also significant as the value obtained is 0.0000. Perceived Influence has an influence on intention to purchase the brands being recommended as the value obtained is 0.004. Hence hypotheses 3 is significant. Brand engagement in self-concept also has an impact on brand expected Value. The followers' brand Engagement in self-concept has an effect on brand expected value and it is accepted at the 5% level. However, brand engagement in self-concept does not lead to an intention to purchase as the value obtained is greater than the value 0.05. Hence hypotheses 5 is rejected at the 5% level. Similarly, brand expected value does not lead to an Intention to purchase the brands being recommended as the value obtained is 0.090
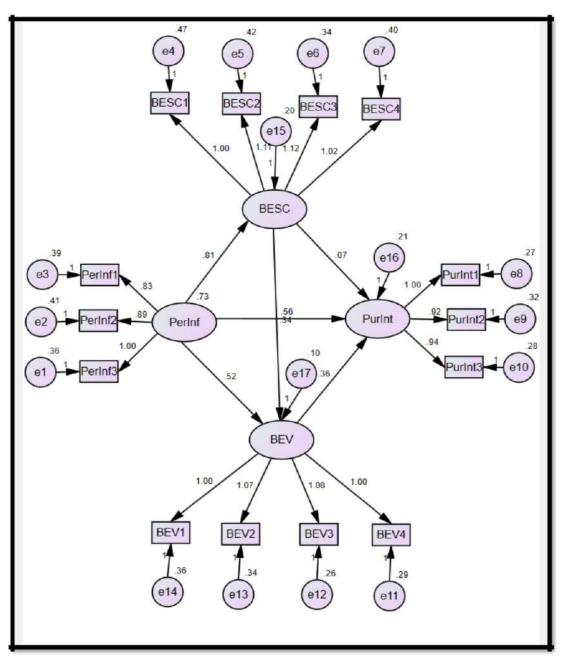
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Fig:1

Mediation

The mediation analysis was done using SPSS process. The results of mediation analysis are shown in Table 5, 6,7 & 8.

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Table 5

OUTCOME VARIABLE: Brandeng

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.7193	0.5173	0.4180	217.5697	1.0000	203.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	0.3987	0.1772	2.2503	0.0255	0.0494	0.7480
PercInfl	0.7774	0.0527	14.7502	0.0000	0.6735	0.8813

Table 5 shows that the first mediation variable Brand engagement in self-concept(Brandeng) is given in terms of the independent variable perceived influence(PercInfl) as follows

Brandeng = 0.3987 + 0.7774 X PercInfl

Table 6

OUTCOME VARIABLE: Brandexp

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.8135	0.6617	0.2417	197.5811	2.0000	202.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	0 .8168	0.1364	5.9893	0.0000	0.5479	1.0858
PercInfl	0.4220	0.0577	7.3150	0.0000	0.3082	0.5357
Brandeng	0 .4046	0.0534	7.5803	0.0000	0.2993	0.5098

Table 6 shows that the second mediation variable Brand expected value(Brandexp) is given in terms of the independent variables Perceived influence(PercInfl) and Brand engagement in self-concept(Brandeng) as follows

Brandexp = 0.8168 + 0.4220 X PercInfl + 0.4046 X Brandeng

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Table 7

OUTCOME VARIABLE: Purchint

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0 .7815	0.6108	0.3314	105.1294	3.0000	201.0000	0.0000

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	0.2805	0.1733		1.6185	0.1071	-0.0612	0.6222
PercInfl	0.3747	0.0760		4.9322	0.0000	0.2249	0.5245
Brandeng	0.1742	0.0708		2.4598	0.0147	0.0346	0.3139
Brandexp	0.3559	0.0824		4.3199	0.0000	0.1935	0.5184

Table 7 shows that the outcome variable Intention to purchase recommended brands(Purchint) is given in terms of the independent variables Perceived influence(PercInfl), Brand engagement in self-concept(Brandeng) and Brand expected value as follows

Purchint = 0.2805 + 0.3747 X PercInfl + 0.1742 X Brandeng + 0.3559 X Brandexp

Table 8

Direct & Indirect Effects of Perceived Influence(X) on Intention to purchase recommended brands (Y)

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0.3747	0 .0760	4.9322	0.0000	0.2249	0.5245

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	0.3975	0 .0916	0.2326	0 .5905
Ind1	0.1354	0.0699	0.0077	0.2802
Ind2	0.1502	0.0527	0.0563	0.2660
Ind3	0 .1119	0 .0367	0.0414	0.1842

Indirect effect key:
Ind1 PercInfl -> Brandeng -> Purchint
Ind2 PercInfl -> Brandexp -> Purchint
Ind3 PercInfl -> Brandeng -> Brandexp -> Purchint

Table 8 highlights that the direct effect of perceived influence(X) on intention to purchase recommended brands (Y) is significant at 1% level. The table also shows that the bootstrap confidence intervals for all the 3 indirect effects do not include 0. Hence all the 3 indirect effects are significant.

Hence, mediation analysis shows that hypotheses 7,8 & 9 are accepted.

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Discussion and implications

Even though there is a great potential for studies on micro celebrities, very few studies were carried out on the influence of micro celebrities on brand experience (Eroğlu, F. et al., 2019) The study reveals that the perceived influence leads to brand engagement in self-concept (H_1). This finding adds to the previous research that suggests that extrinsic aspiration is related to brand engagement in self-concept (Wiktor Razmus et al.,2017). This finding is also in line with the study undertaken by David Jiménez-Castillo et al. (2019). The study also demonstrates that perceived influence of micro celebrities lead to brand expected value(H_2). This finding is in line with result that users find the micro celebrities credible if they follow certain criteria for online behavior and self-presentation (Djafarova, E. and Trofimenko, O.et al., 2019). Further this paper found that perceived influence of micro celebrity's impacts purchase intention(H_3). Also, the result adds to the finding that communications made by the celebrities on Instagram would influence consumers to adopt these platforms (Srivastava, A et al., 2020). This result also adds to the finding made in the study by Osei-Frimpong, K. et al. (2019). The study revealed that celebrity endorser with attributes trustworthiness, attractiveness and familiarity has a positive influence on purchase intention. The paper identified that the impact of brand engagement in self-concept on brand expected value is positive(H_4). This result is also in line with the result obtained by David Jiménez-Castillo et al. (2019). Also, the research shows that brand engagement in self-concept does not influence purchase intention (H_5). This result is contrary to the earlier studies by David Jiménez-Castillo et al. (2019). But, this result substantiates the result that brand engagement in self-concept influences both brand loyalty and positive WOM (Nyadzayo, M.W.,2020). The study showed that the brand expected value does not lead to purchase intention(H_6). This result is contrary to the result obtained by David Jiménez-Castillo et al. (2019). The paper also highlighted the mediating effect of brand engagement in self-concept between perceived influence and purchase intention (H_7). This result adds to the result that brand engagement completely mediates between destination brand authenticity and revisit intention and the relationship between brand self-congruence and recommendation

intention (Chen, R. et al., 2020). This also adds to the result that brand engagement in self-concept mediates between value consciousness and loyalty (Ismail, A.R.et al., 2020). The research also revealed that brand expected value mediates the relationship between perceived influence of micro celebrity and purchase intention(H_8). The study demonstrated that brand engagement in self-concept and brand expected value mediates the relationship between perceived influence of micro celebrity on purchase intention(H_9).

Theoretical Contribution

The main theoretical contribution of the study is that it proves that brand engagement in self-concept mediates the effect of perceived influence of micro celebrities on purchase intention. The other major contribution of the study is that it proves brand expected value mediates the effect of perceived influence of micro celebrities on purchase intention. Also, brand engagement in self-concept and brand expected value mediates the effect of perceived influence of micro celebrities on purchase intention.

Practical Implications

The study shows that the micro celebrities change the perception & opinion of followers and this in turn lead to the personal connection between the brands & the followers. Also, when the personal connection changes then the followers purchase the brand suggested by the influencers. The study also reveals that when the followers value the opinion of influencers then the followers will positively value the brands suggested by influencers. Also, when the value of the suggested brand increases then followers would take the brand recommendations of the influencers. The study highlights that when micro celebrities suggest brands to followers then the followers will have a close personal connection with the brands and this in turn would increase the attractiveness of the suggested brands which would lead to the purchase of the brand suggested by influencers.

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