



**Bryant University**

HONORS THESIS

# **The Comparison of Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing by Brands and Influencers for Organic Cosmetics**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation  
with honors in the Bryant University Honors Program  
APRIL 2021

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**ABSTRACT**

The cosmetics industry, one of the largest industries in the world, has taken a major shift toward organic products. Consumers prefer these products because they are safer on the human skin, have longer lasting positive effects, and do not harm animals in the creation of the product.

Marketing strategies have taken a major shift toward social media. Partnering with influencers to promote products has become increasingly popular because it can be more effective by creating a deeper, more personal relationship with consumers (Glucksman, 2017). However, distrust has been growing toward influencer marketing because their recommendations are not always authentic (Kowalewisc, 2020).

The purpose of this project is to determine which source (influencer vs brand) is more effective in the persuasion of consumers in the organic cosmetic industry. An experiment will be utilized to compare the effects of an Instagram advertisement from a brand and an influencer for organic cosmetics on persuading consumer attitude toward the product. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between the brand condition and consumer attitude toward organic cosmetics. The results also indicated that goodwill mediated the relationship between the brand and consumer outcomes.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The cosmetics industry is one of the largest industries in the world. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the cosmetics industry legally includes “skin moisturizers, perfumes, lipsticks, fingernail polishes, eye and facial makeup, cleansing shampoos, permanent waves, hair colors, and deodorants, as well as any substance intended for use as a component of a cosmetic product,” but exclude soaps (FDA). This covers a larger array of products that males and females use daily than most people expect. People are spending considerably more amounts of money on cosmetic products in recent decades. In 2019, the cosmetic industry in the United States alone generated \$49.5 billion (Shahbandeh, 2020).

According to the Soil Association, organic cosmetics are “the formulation of cosmetic products using organically farmed ingredients. These ingredients are grown without the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GM), herbicides, synthetic fertilisers and more” (“What is Organic Beauty?”). Organic cosmetics also include no animal testing (“What is Organic Beauty?”). Some of the benefits of using organic products according to Dr. Group are eco friendly, no harsh chemicals, natural fragrance, nutrient rich, prevention of premature aging, and gentleness on the skin (2014). Many nonorganic cosmetics have harsh chemicals that can cause premature aging. Organic cosmetics preserve and emphasize natural beauty without the harmful effects of nonorganic products.

The cosmetics industry, like many other industries, has taken a major shift towards organic preference of the consumer. This is a result of an increase in consumer consciousness. With increasing interest in the consumption of organic, cruelty free cosmetics, Statista projects the natural and organic cosmetics industry market size to rise from \$34.5 billion in 2018 to \$54.5 billion in 2021 (Ridder, 2020). This increasing interest derives from research linking ingredients commonly used in traditional cosmetics to cancer, premature aging, and Alzheimer’s disease.

Another trend in the business industry comes from the increasing prevalence of social media. Companies in every industry are now including and/or shifting toward the use of social media influencers as a form of advertisement. *Forbes Magazine* defines influencer marketing as “a

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less explicit method of advertising products and services via credible individuals with dedicated web or social media followings. These can take the form of social media influencers or niche experts in fields such as cosmetics, athletics or interior design” (Rahal, 2020). The companies will pay an individual with a large social media following to promote their product. This can be done organically through Instagram posts or stories, YouTube videos, TikToks, Snapchats, Facebook live or posts, or any other form posting on social media. Social media influencers will often tell their followers how much they love this product and why to increase attraction toward the product.

Influencer marketing can be effective because it can create a reliable recommendation for the product. Consumers oftentimes are very cynical and distrusting of advertisements. They are very suspicious of false advertisements, skeptical that they are simply attempting to lure them in to make a profit instead of trusting the benefits promoted. Influencer marketing creates “product recommendations from trusted, influential people” in order to “shed the cynicism that marks the average consumer response to advertising. When recommended by a trusted source, consumers let their guard down, so to speak, and are more receptive to product or service suggestions” (Rahal, 2020). Consumers often look up to these social media influencers hence why they follow them. They are more likely to purchase a product that someone they look up to uses and recommends.

As of 2018, social media influencers were utilized in 86% of marketing strategies with a 92% effectiveness rate deemed. It is predicted that the influencer marketing industry will increase from \$8 billion in 2019 to \$15 billion by 2020 (Rahal, 2020). It primarily targets younger generations who more commonly use social media platforms. However, it is an effective marketing strategy for all generations who use social media. This is an increasing and effective marketing trend that is shaping the future of the marketing industry.

Despite some major increases in influencer marketing, some skepticism of its effectiveness has arisen in some industries. According to *Forbes Magazine*, “many consumers are beginning to realize that influencers aren't necessarily authentic product users; they are spokespeople who are paid to pitch products on social media instead of on TV. Thus,

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influencers are more often being seen as insincere” (Kowalewisc, 2020). In addition, consumers cannot relate to some of their extravagant lifestyles. As a result, some consumers view influencer marketing unauthentic and untrustworthy, making it ineffective particularly in certain industries.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### Organic Cosmetics

#### a. Consumer Attitude

Research on consumer attitudes toward organic cosmetics found that the attitude for most respondents was positive. Consumers understand that although their purchases account for a small percentage, it accumulates to make a bigger difference against the major issues in non-green cosmetics. “Some respondents considered buying green cosmetics as an important part of responsible buying behaviour because green cosmetics were safe for the users and minimized the damage to the environment” (Lin et al., 2018).

Many factors influence the development of attitude toward green cosmetics such as personal experience, lifestyle, marketing technique, and social surrounding. If consumers have previously tried organic cosmetics and had unsatisfactory results, they are more likely to have a negative opinion on cosmetics and prefer other types of cosmetics for price and performance (Lin et al., 2018). Individuals with higher knowledge about the environment have a more favorable attitude toward green cosmetics. These individuals have a higher motivation for purchasing green cosmetics because they understand the benefits of their selection. Health conscious or vegan lifestyles lead to more favorable attitudes on organic/green cosmetics (Lin et al., 2018).

Marketing strategy is the most influential factor on attitude toward organic cosmetics because many consumers are not knowledgeable about organic brands or what organic cosmetics even are. Consumers have positive attitudes towards trustworthy sources of advertisement. For these reasons, people have a more favorable attitude toward green cosmetics that people in their social surrounding, such as family and friends, use. This creates a more trustworthy source of advertisement through word of mouth (Lin et al., 2018).

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While people generally have a positive attitude toward organic cosmetics because they see the benefit, some people have a negative attitude because they can be more expensive. According to a study done by Agnieszka Rybowska, “Consumers... perceive eco cosmetic products as luxury because they are hardly available and expensive” (Rybowska, 2014). The reason for a higher price is because the products require more effort and more costly processes to be made. Due to lack in regulation around organic claims by the FDA, people view organic products as an excuse to be charged more. Marketing strategies are especially important with organic products to iterate the benefits of opting for an organic product over a nonorganic competitor that is usually cheaper.

b. Consumer Purchase Intention

Consumers with the highest purchase intention were found to be college educated females 20-40 years old with an average income of 500 euros per month (Dragan & Petrescu, 2013). That is about \$600 USD. These college educated women have the knowledge to understand the benefits of organic cosmetics but more importantly have the funds. Price is the biggest hinderer of consumer purchase intention of organic cosmetics. Most consumers purchase conventional cosmetics because they are unaware of the benefits of organic cosmetics and do not have ample funds to try organic cosmetics (Dragan & Petrescu, 2013).

Consumers are also more likely to have a higher purchase intention of organic cosmetics if they have past pleasant experiences with the products (Mombeini et al., 2015). They have personally reaped the benefits of organic cosmetics and understand that the products are worth the higher price. In addition, purchase intention is higher if someone in an individual’s social circle utilizes the organic product. This provides them with a trustworthy, unbiased word of mouth recommendation which is more likely to increase their purchase intention (Lin et al., 2018).

Marketing Strategies

a. Social Media Marketing

With the continued rise of technology, social media has become more and more utilized. According to “Social Network Usage & Growth Statistics: How Many People Use Social

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Media in 2021?,” 3.96 million people worldwide use social media, nearly doubling since 2015. 70% of all Americans use social media and 83% of Americans 13 years old and up. The average person spends nearly 2.5 hours on social media a day (Dean, 2021).

With these trends, businesses have quickly realized that they needed to have a presence on social media “as a part of their larger marketing strategy to ensure they remain up to speed and connected with customers and consumer trends” (“The Rise of Social media Marketing”). In order for a business to stay competitive and attract attention, it is critical in this day and age to utilize social media marketing.

Consumers have very little free time. Usually, 8 hours of the day are spent asleep, and 8 hours are spent at work or school. That leaves consumers with around 8 hours of their own time. They are spending over 30% of that free time on social media (Dean, 2021). To stay relevant and appeal to their target market, particularly Gen Z and Millennials who dominate social media (Dean, 2021), they need to incorporate marketing into the social media platforms. As a result, companies in all industries are posting advertisements on their brand accounts, partnering with influencers and celebrities for promotions, and spending some of their marketing budget to release sponsored advertisements across the various platforms.

b. Social Media Influencer Marketing

A major trend in social media marketing that has arisen is social media influencer marketing. Research revealed social media influencers to be effective forms of advertising. It enables consumers to be able to interact with the product on a deeper level. “Watching a trusted source... use a product allows consumers to feel as if they are making a more informed decision when making a purchase” (Glucksman, 2017).

Instagram is an incredibly impactful platform for social media influencers. The design of Instagram enables social media influencers to respond to questions their followers have regarding a post advertising a product. These features allow a more personal recommendation (Glucksman, 2017). Influencers who interact more with their followers are social media are more likely to be effective in their marketing.

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Influencer authenticity and confidence are important qualities for successful advertisement (Glucksman, 2017). Social media influencers who are genuine in their posts and allow their personality to sink through in their recommendations create a deeper relationship with their followers. Followers feel that their recommendation is more authentic when the social media influencer is authentic in her display of the recommendation (Glucksman, 2017). Confidence is also important in the influencer's portrayal of the recommendation of a product. Confidence in the opinion of the product being advertised makes the consumer more confident in the honesty of the message. As a result, they have a more positive attitude and higher purchase intention toward the product (Glucksman, 2017).

Sometimes, the meaning of a brand can be conveyed more effectively through a social media influencer increasing purchase intention of the product (Lim et al., 2017). "Respondents were more likely to accept meanings from brands endorsed by social media influencers, with whom they perceived as a resemblance to themselves or whom they admired" (Lim et al., 2017). Consumers can understand the brand meaning better of a product when it is portrayed by an influencer.

Social media influencers are effective when their lifestyle is congruent to the brand they are advertising (Lim et al., 2017). Consumers purchase intention increases when a social media influencer's lifestyle is in line with the brand message. Social media influencers are more trustworthy and deemed more knowledgeable when the messages they promote are congruent. If the messages do not align with the brand's, then influencer marketing does not prove to be as affective.

While influencer marketing has been increasing significantly in popularity, research suggests that it may not be as effective as it is believed to be. Consumers are becoming increasingly distrusting of social media influencers. Research done by YouGov and Grey London found that 96% of people do not trust social media influencers and 18% trust brand marketing more than influencer on social media (Watson, 2019).

Social media influencers first arose from genuine and authentic recommendations. As their platforms, grew influencers turned into marketers, getting paid to promote various products.

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As a result, there are “blurring lines between sponsorships and authentic recommendations” causing people to lose trust in these influencers (Quoc, 2017). According to research done by Michael Quoc, 52% of millennial women said they trust social media influencers less than they used to (2017). This is a result of them realizing that their recommendations are not authentic, and many influencers have never even used the products they promote. They are solely driven by money to make these recommendations.

c. Social Media Brand Marketing

Social media brand marketing is also an effective form of advertising because it allows for two-way communication between the brand and the consumer. Traditional marketing, such as newspaper ads, tv commercials, etc. are one way communication. Social media brand marketing allows the customer to provide feedback and interact with the brand more closely. In fact, 68% of Instagram users interact with brands regularly and one in three online users take to social media to find out more about a product (Galov, 2021).

Some of the many benefits of brand social media marketing include “interacting with customers, establishing/improving relationships with customers, collection of customer feedback, brand awareness, customer participation, creation of communities, promoting products, increasing sales, and more targeted customers” (Akbarov, 2020). Brand social media marketing enables brands are to develop a deeper relationship with their customers which leads to “brand trust, brand loyalty and community sentiment among members” (Akbarov, 2020).

Another major benefit of social media brand marketing is that it is low cost. The only cost the brand endures is the salary of the people who run the social media pages and create the campaigns. They do not need to pay for print advertisements or pay an influencer to promote their product as well through their social media accounts. There is no cost to run a social media page besides the person’s time doing so. If a company opts to run a paid promotion on social media to increase their consumers, they can tailor the reach of the advertisement to fit the budget that they have left.

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Theory

a. Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is a marketing theory that explains attitude change based on the mechanisms and effectiveness of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The framework consists of two potential mechanisms for persuasion: the central or peripheral route. The central route involves “careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of the information presented in support of an advocacy” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This route results in true support or opposition to a communication and an unwavering attitude. The peripheral route, which is often more common, involves a simple cue that leads to persuasion without a true analysis of the message of the communication. This type of route causes a more temporary attitude change because it is not based on merit. The simple cues can be attractiveness, number of arguments, source credibility or more (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

This theoretical framework is particularly interesting for marketing because it demonstrates how source credibility can be an effective mechanism for persuading. It reveals the importance of the source of an advertisement and its perceived credibility. According to the ELM, the source of an advertisement can make or break the effectiveness of the advertisement. Sources that have more credibility, such as a direct source from a company, may be more effective at persuading a consumer to purchase a product rather than a third party, who is not directly involved in the production of a product. A credible source can serve as a peripheral cue that can persuade a consumer and ultimately create an effective advertisement.

b. Credibility and Goodwill

Credibility has been deemed an important mechanism in persuasion since Aristotle’s time. Aristotle himself viewed credibility or ethos to be the “source’s most potent means of persuasion” (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Since credibility is such a versatile umbrella term it is often broken down into various subparts to further define it. Goodwill is one very important element of credibility (McCroskey & Teven, 1999).

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Goodwill, or perceived caring, creates a caring construct between the consumer and a company. If a company is perceived to have goodwill, they are viewed as having the best interests of the consumer in mind instead of the interests of their business. A company with goodwill will value their customers more than making money. As a result, the source is viewed as caring. (McCroskey & Teven, 1999).

c. Importance of Goodwill in Organic Cosmetics

The FDA, which is responsible for regulating the cosmetic industry as well as others, created the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act in 1938 to establish quality standards for cosmetics. No additions or amendments have been added to the quality standard since this act despite countless new research on the harmful effects of chemicals in cosmetics. Under this law, the FDA does not need to approve any cosmetic safety unless it has a color additive. Due to the lack of update to laws by the FDA, cosmetic products can be falsely labelled organic and cruelty-free because they define no qualifications for a cosmetic to be labelled as such. This leaves the usage of this term to the discretion of the brand (FDA).

Goodwill is especially important with organic cosmetics in order for the customer to be able to trust the usage of the label “organic.” If the consumer does not deem the source of the advertisement as having their best interests in mind, then they will likely not be trusting that the product is truly “organic” and will provide them with the natural benefits they expect. As a result, they will be far less likely to opt for an organic cosmetic over a nonorganic competitor that may be less expensive. Instead, consumers will see the organic label merely as a way to make more money instead of benefiting the consumer. As previously mentioned, the consumer will have a more positive attitude toward organic cosmetics if they trust the source of the advertisement (Lin et al., 2018). This trust is created through perceived goodwill.

Due to the lack of regulation on the usage of the term organic in cosmetics, not just anyone should make this claim about the product. The brand should be the authoritative figure that defines the product as organic. Only the brand should make this claim because they are directly involved in the production of the product. As a result, they are aware if it is truly natural and cruelty-free. An influencer, as a third party, is not directly involved in the

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production so they are not aware of the products they are promoting as organic truly are organic. Goodwill can only be established by a brand and not an influencer for these reasons.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

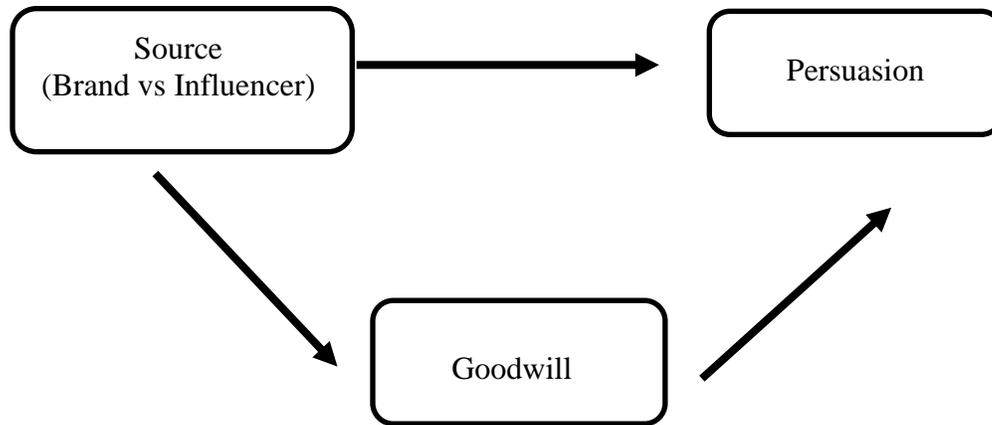
The purpose of this research is to examine which source is more effective in persuading consumers in the organic cosmetics marketing.

Is influencer or brand (source) more effective in persuading consumers in organic cosmetic marketing?

Based on the previous research conducted, it is anticipated that despite the rise in popularity of social media influencer marketing (Rahal, 2020), social media brand marketing will be a more effective strategy for persuading consumers for marketing organic cosmetics than social media influencer marketing. Since organic cosmetics are not regulated well, consumers must perceive goodwill from the advertisement to trust that their products really are organic (FDA). This requires the consumer to put a lot of trust in the brands.

Based on the ELM, it is anticipated that consumers will be more persuaded by the brand, the authoritative source, because it appears more credible than including a third-party source, the influencer, in labeling the product as “organic” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The brand is more directly involved in the creation of the product than the influencer, so they would have a better understanding if the cosmetics are created to be organic. Since there is already a growing distrust regarding influencer marketing (Watson, 2019), there could be greater distrust in an industry that relies heavily on consumer trust and brand goodwill to accurately label cosmetics as “organic.”

As a result, it is anticipated that consumer attitude will be more positively related when viewing a brand advertisement compared to from an influencer. Goodwill is believed to play a mediating role because the consumers will be more trusting of advertisements directly from the brand rather than from a paid influencer. Please find the conceptual framework below (*see Figure 1*).



*Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework for Mediating Role of Goodwill in Persuasion for Consumers*

H1: Brand communication will be more effective in persuading consumers than influencer communication in organic cosmetics.

H2: Good will play a mediating role in this effect.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To test my hypothesis, I conducted an experiment (*see Appendix A*). A convenience sample was collected through social media promotions, such as Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, to gather participants for the experiment. Participants had to pass a screener question stating that they were between 18-23 years old in order to continue with the survey. Anyone who was outside the age demographic was directed to the end of the survey and no data was collected from them. One participant did not complete the survey resulting in the removal of their data.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (*see Figure 2*). One group viewed a post from a brand Instagram account advertising an organic moisturizer. The other group viewed an Instagram post from a cosmetic influencer of the same organic moisturizer

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from the brand. Dependent variables relevant to marketers were collected that are specifically important to understand the consumer behavior.

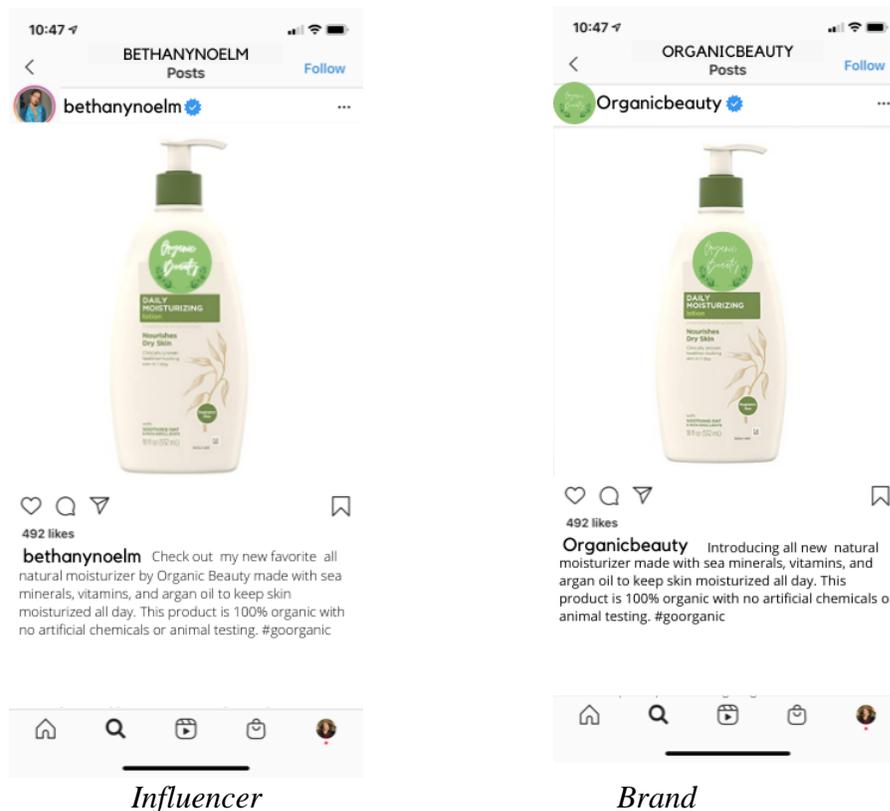


Figure 2 - Stimuli

Three different categories were used to measure the dependent variable of consumer persuasion: purchase likelihood, information search likelihood, and word of mouth promotion likelihood. Participants were presented with three questions to evaluate their purchase intentions on a 5-point bipolar scale (*unlikely/likely, definitely would not/definitely would, improbable/probably, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$* ). Next, I asked how likely participants were to search for more information on the organic product on a 5-point bipolar scale (*unlikely/likely, definitely would not/definitely would, improbable/probably, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$* ). To capture word of mouth promotion, I asked how likely participants were to tell others about the

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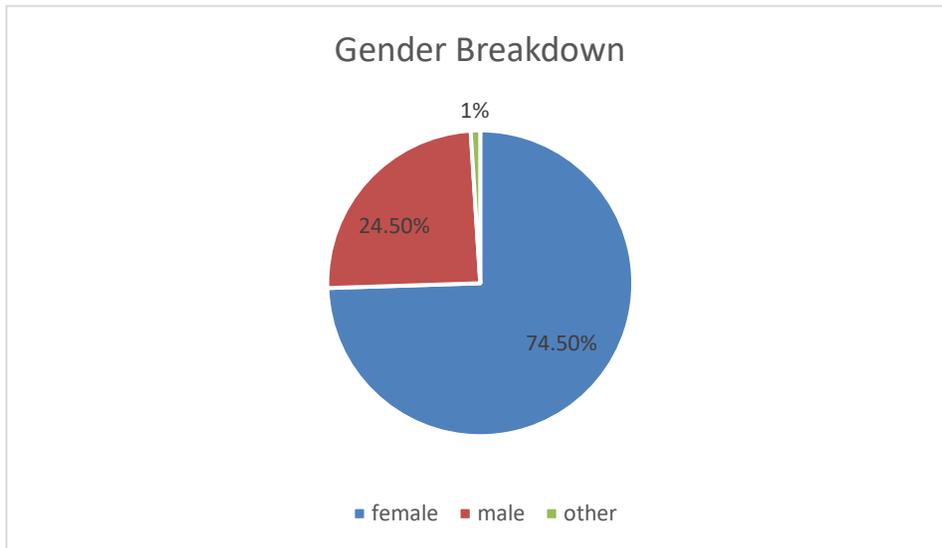
product on a 5-point bipolar scale (*unlikely/likely, definitely would not/definitely would, improbable/probably, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$* ). Next, they were asked several questions regarding the mediating role of goodwill in their likely behaviors on a 5-point bipolar scale (*has best interest at heart/doesn't have my best interests at heart, concerned with me/unconcerned with me,  $r = 0.61$* ). A manipulation check was performed to evaluate the participant's perception of the condition they received, whether the post they saw was from a company or an influencer ( $2 = \text{company}$ ,  $6 = \text{influencer}$ ). At the end of the experiment, participants were asked various questions to gauge their general attitude toward organic cosmetics as well as various demographic questions such as gender, age, ethnicity, household income, and education levels.

## **RESULTS**

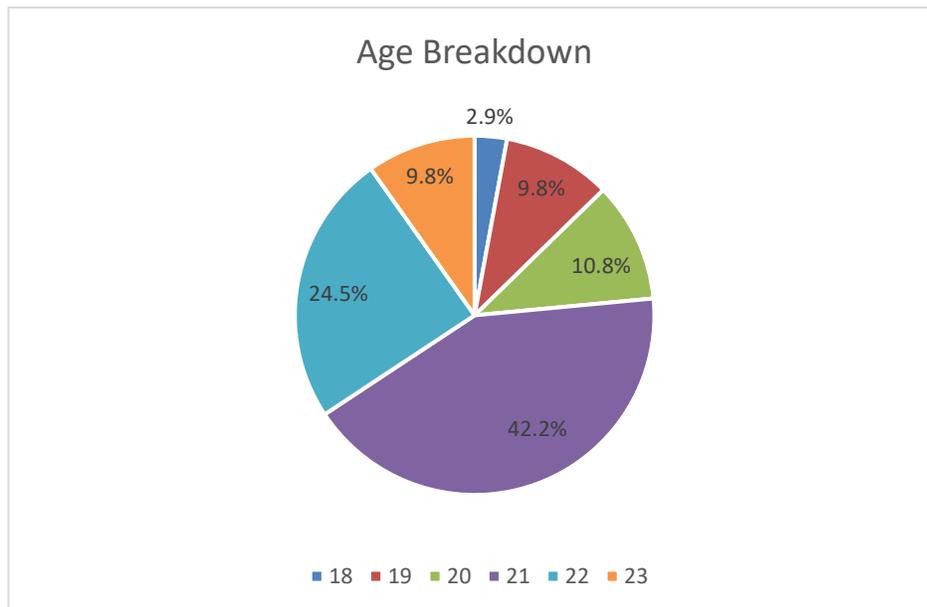
In total, 103 people participated in the survey and only one person did not complete it after starting. Since the survey was randomized with equal frequency in Qualtrics, 52 respondents viewed the influencer stimuli and 51 viewed the brand stimuli. As previously mentioned, one participant did not complete the survey and their data was removed from the analysis. Of the 102 participants who finished the survey, 24.5% were males, 74.5% were females, and 1% selected the "other" option (*see Figure 3*). It would have been preferable to have seen a more equal gender breakdown in respondents. However, females tend to care more about cosmetics in general so it was expected that females may be more inclined to complete the survey. The target generation selected for research was Generation Z. Participants had to complete a screen question to ensure they were between 18-23 years old in order to participate. 2.9% were 18 years old, 9.8% were 19, 10.8% were 20, 42.2% were 21, 24.5% were 22, and 9.8% were 23 years old (*see Figure 4*).

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*Figure 3 – Gender Breakdown*



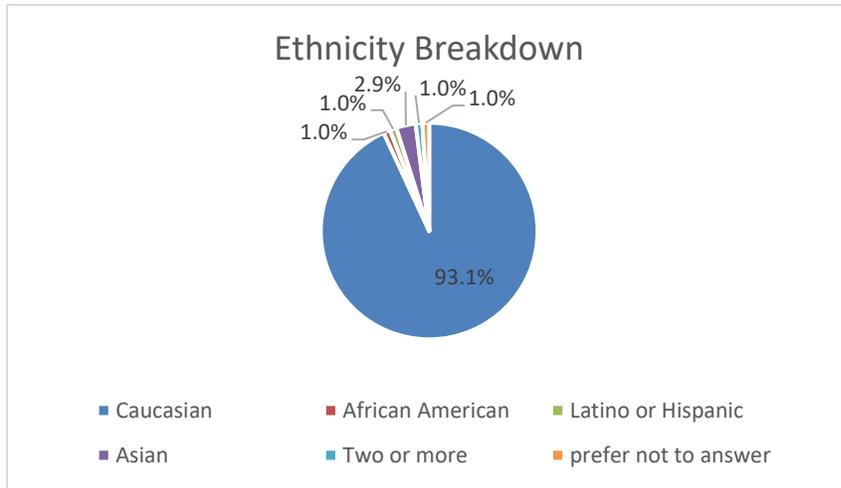
*Figure 4 – Age Breakdown*

For ethnicity, the majority of respondents, 93.1%, were Caucasian. 2.9% of respondents were Asian. African Americans, Latinos or Hispanics, two or more ethnicities, and prefer not to answer each made up 1% of the sample (*see Figure 5*). There was no representation of Native Americans, Native Hawaiian/Island Pacific, or other/unknown ethnicities from this sample. While there was diversity in the respondents, the large majority were Caucasian as a result of

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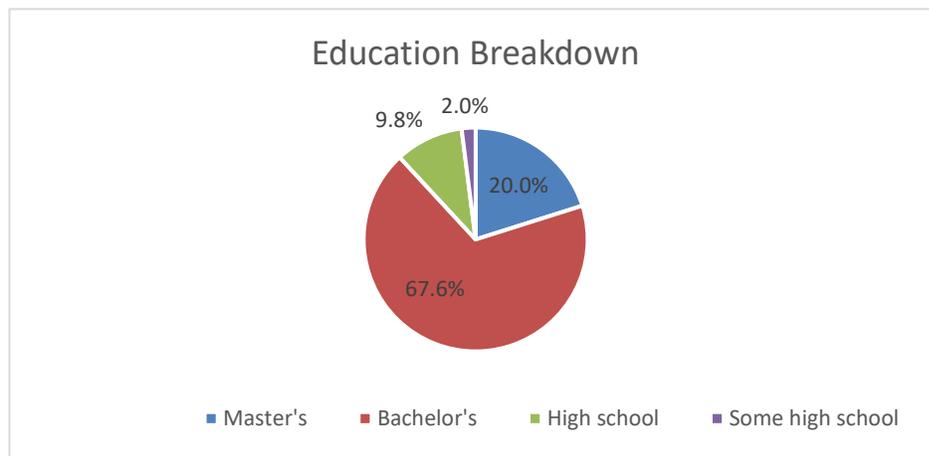
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the convenience sample. It would have been beneficial to have seen a more equal representation.



*Figure 5 – Ethnicity Breakdown*

For education, the majority of respondents were receiving a bachelor’s degree at 67.6%, 20% were pursuing their Master’s, 9.8% completed high school, and 2% only finished some high school (*see Figure 6*). Therefore, the vast majority of respondents were well-educated, and college educated at 88.2%.



*Figure 6 – Education Breakdown*

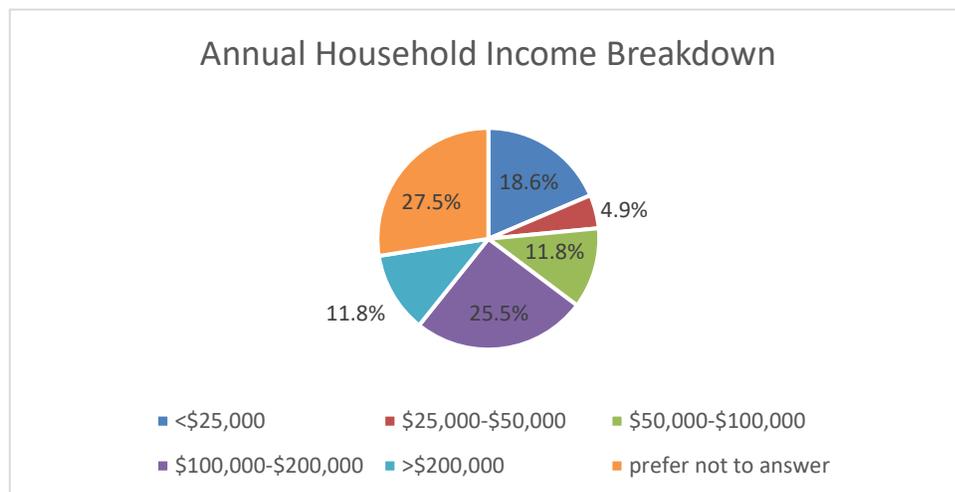
Income wise, there was a more equal representation of yearly income. The majority of respondents, at 27.5%, preferred not to answer this question. The largest recorded yearly

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income bracket was \$100,000-200,000. 18.6% had less than \$25,000 per year. \$50,000-100,000 and more than \$200,000 were both 11.8%. 4.9% of respondents had a household income of \$25,000-\$50,000 per year (*see Figure 7*). There was a wide diversity of all three social classes which is very beneficial for understanding the financial impact of organic cosmetics. Based on the responses, there may be some confusion with the questions. Generation Z is in a very intermediary point in their lives, usually new to college or just out. Some respondents may have answered the question based on their personal income a year if they live alone and others may still live with their parents and have calculated their parents' income as well.



*Figure 7 – Annual Household Income Breakdown*

A one-way (influencer vs. brand) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the manipulation check. As expected, participants in the influencer condition perceived the advertisement to be from an influencer ( $M_I = 5.40$ ) than from a brand ( $M_b = 2.49$ ,  $F(1,101) = 218.02$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Next, we performed ANOVA, source (brand vs. influencer) as the independent variable and purchase likelihood as the dependent variable. There was a significant effect, such that those who saw the brand post were more likely to purchase the product compared to those who saw the influencer post ( $M_i = 2.52$ ,  $M_b = 3.22$ ,  $F(1,101) = 8.15$ ,  $p = 0.005$ , *see Figure 8*). Next, we performed another ANOVA, source (brand vs. influencer) as the independent variable and information search likelihood as the dependent variable. ANOVA also revealed marginally significant effect. Those participants who saw the brand

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post were more likely to search for more information on the product compared to those who saw the influencer post ( $M_i=2.49$ ,  $M_b= 2.84$ ,  $F(1,101)=2.15$ ,  $p=.15$ , see Figure 9). Finally, we performed another ANOVA, source (brand vs. influencer) as independent variable and word of mouth advertising likelihood as the dependent variable. In addition, those who saw the brand post were more likely to tell their friends or family about the product compared to those who saw the influencer post ( $M_i= 2.03$ ,  $M_b= 2.33$ ,  $F(1,101)=2.31$ ,  $p=.13$ , see Figure 10). In summary, the data analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between the brand condition and purchase likelihood. Marginal relationships were also revealed between the brand condition and information search and word of mouth advertising likelihoods.

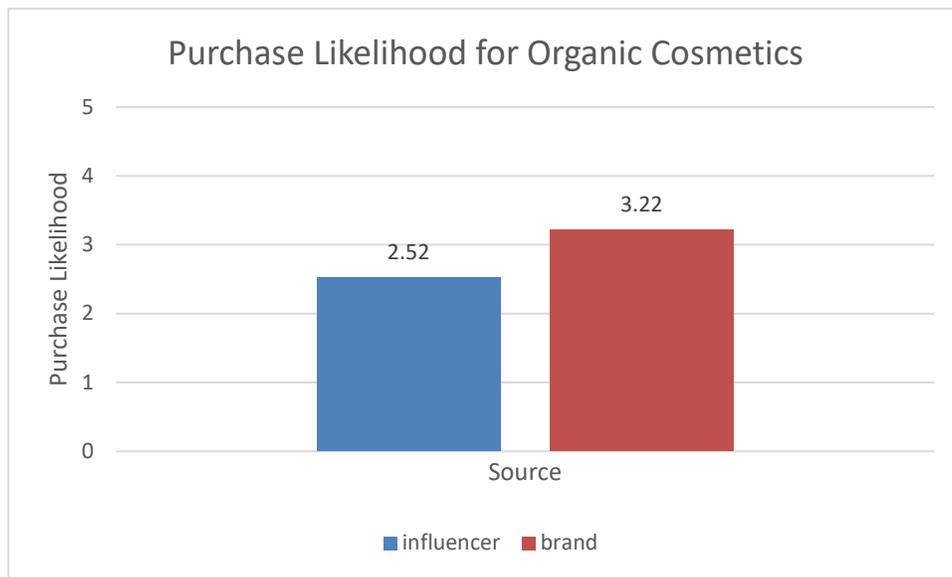
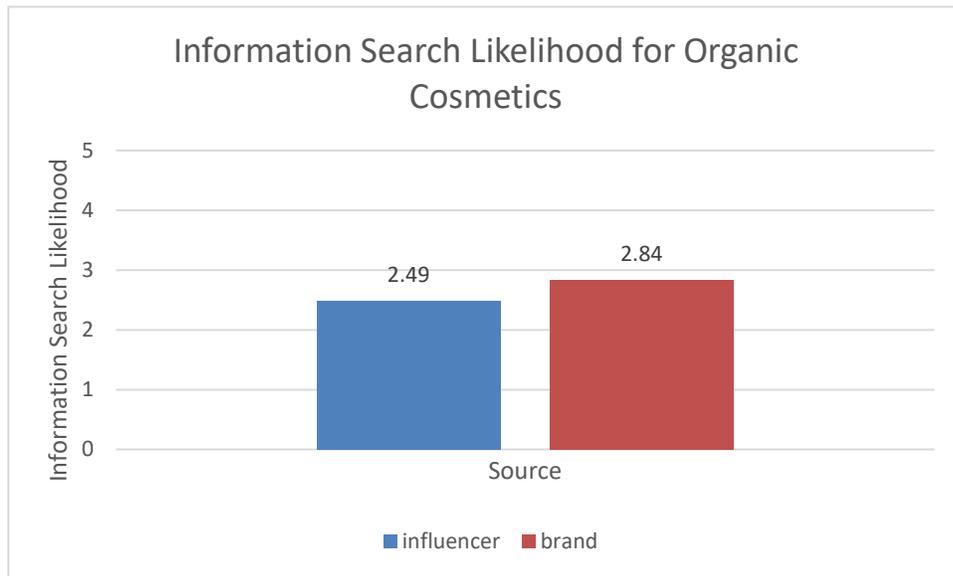


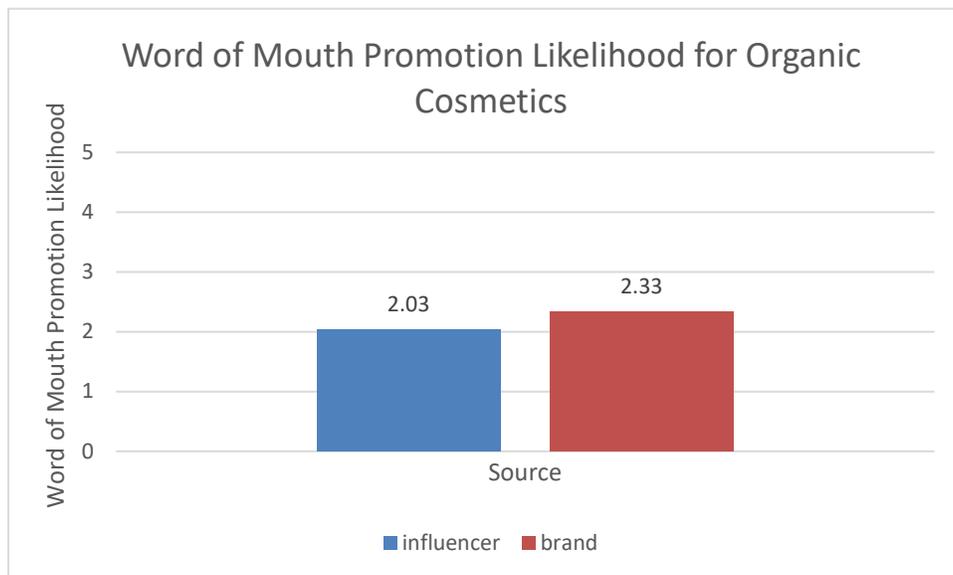
Figure 8 – Purchase Likelihood of the Organic Cosmetic by Source Stimuli

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*Figure 9 – Information Search Likelihood of Organic Cosmetic by Source Stimuli*

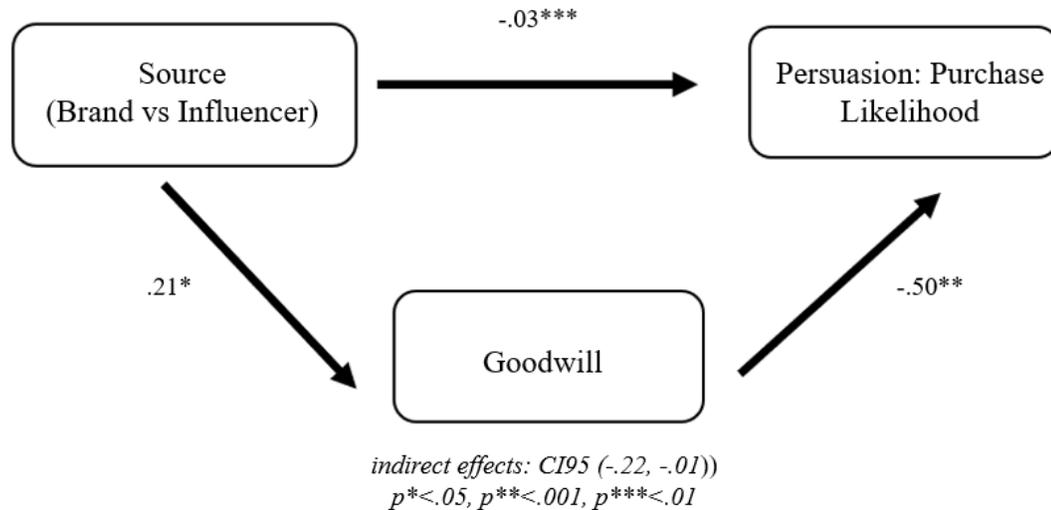


*Figure 10 – Word of Mouth Promotion Likelihood of Organic Cosmetic by Source Stimuli*

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In addition, the mediating role of goodwill was tested using a bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes 2008). The results indicated that goodwill fully mediated the positive relationship between the brand and consumer outcomes (*indirect effects: CI95 (-.22, -.01)*, see *Figure 11*).

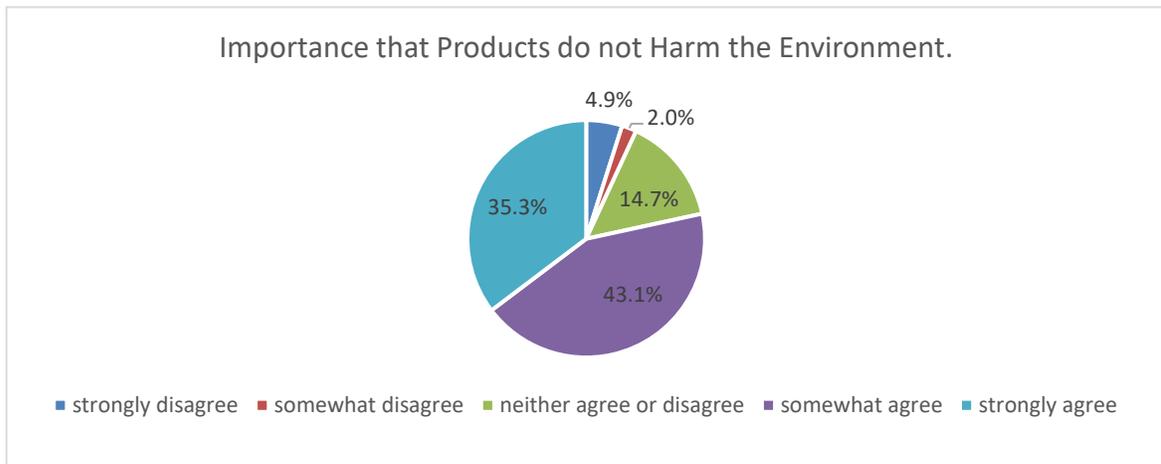


*Figure 11 – Results of Bootstrapping Procedure to Test the Mediating Role of Goodwill*

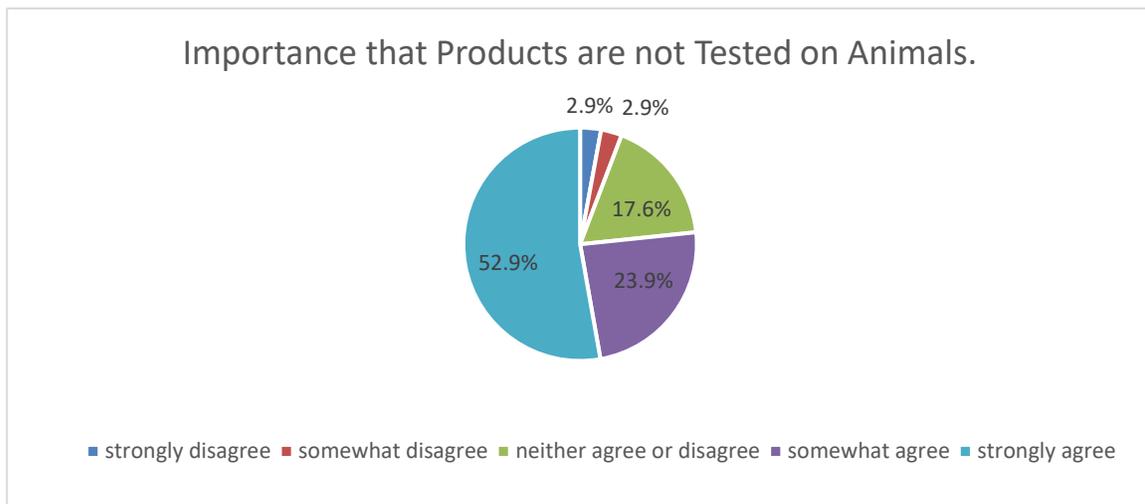
Next, we analyzed the general attitude towards organic products. Participants felt that it was important that their cosmetics possessed the qualities that organic cosmetics have to not harm the environment, not be tested on animals, and not contain artificial ingredients. 78.4% of participants either strongly agreed (35.3%) or somewhat agreed (43.15) that it was important that their cosmetics products did not harm the environment (*see Figure 12*). 76.8% either strongly agreed (52.9%) or somewhat agreed (23.9%) that it was important that their cosmetic products were not tested on animals (*see Figure 13*). 77.5% either strongly agreed (36.3%) or somewhat agreed (41.2%) that it was important that their cosmetic products did not have artificial ingredients (*see Figure 14*). These results for the general organic cosmetic attitude questions reinforced the research previous found that consumers are attracted to these core aspects of organic cosmetics which nonorganic cosmetics do not have.

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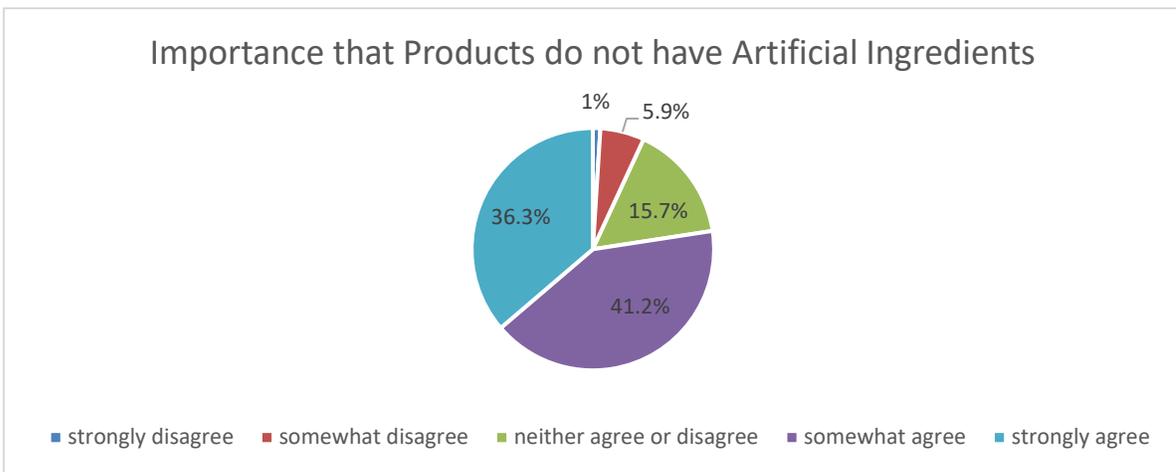
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*Figure 12 – Rating of Importance that Products do not Harm the Environment*



*Figure 13 – Rating of Importance that Products are not Tested on Animals*



*Figure 14 – Rating of Importance that Products do not have Artificial Ingredients*

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD**

As stated above, research has projected influencer marketing to continue to increase in popularity across all industries as an effective form of marketing strategy (Rahal 2020). A survey by Celebrity Intelligence in 2018 specifically revealed that influencer marketing was a popular and effective marketing strategy for cosmetics. The survey revealed that “98% of beauty companies believed that influencer marketing is effective for the industry while 68% thought beauty segment has a natural affinity with influencers” (Bardhan, 2020). Influencer marketing is so effective in the cosmetic industry because it allows for product demonstrations by real people and word-of-mouth promotions in real-time. Extremely successful companies in the cosmetic industry such as Smashbox, Maybelline, Olay, and Estee Lauder are focusing more and more of their marketing budget on influencer marketing strategies (Bardhan, 2020).

Despite this finding for the cosmetic industry, this experiment revealed that influencer marketing is not as effective for organic cosmetics as it is for nonorganic cosmetics compared to brand social media marketing. This is a result of the lack of regulation on the labeling of “organic” on products and the complexity of the industry. It is important to identify this major difference in effective marketing strategies between organic and nonorganic cosmetics in order for organic cosmetics to continue to be successful. In addition, the research was able to define the reason for this trend in organic cosmetics as being driven by goodwill. It is important to have identified the cause of this trend to understand what makes an advertisement effective specifically for Gen Z.

This research made a contribution to the field because while there had been research comparing brand and influencer advertisements, there has been no research done on organic cosmetics. Since organic cosmetics are projected to continue to rise, it is important to understand how to effectively advertise the products to consumers. The relationship identified between persuasion and brand advertisements will enable the organic cosmetics industry to continue to grow and thrive by effectively marketing to consumers.

In addition, this research specifically targeted Gen Z consumers. The importance of understanding this demographic of consumers will only be increasing as they get older and

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move out of their parents houses and live on their own income. As they get older, they will gain autonomy over their purchasing preferences. It is important to understand what qualities are important to them in an advertisement to appeal to this generation. This research identified the key factor as being goodwill, which was previously not specified for this industry.

This information will be especially useful for the marketing industry. It is important for them to understand the exception in the marketing trend for organic cosmetics. They can use this information to better market their products and in turn have more effective advertisement campaigns. In addition, it will be useful for marketing students to understand that marketing trends are not always consistent across industries. It is important to look at each case individually to understand the best way to appeal to your target audience. It stresses the importance of market research and understanding your customer specific to the industry you are in.

### **LIMITATIONS**

While this research showed a relationship between the source and consumer outcomes, it did have some limitations. For one, the large majority of participants were Bryant University students because it was a convenience sample. Since Bryant is predominantly a business school, the majority of respondents have an understanding of the goodwill of businesses and how they function. Business students may view a brand in a better, more authentic light than nonbusiness students because they have been studying how businesses function. This may have been a factor in the trends that were revealed towards higher goodwill for brand advertisements. Secondly, while 102 was a good sample size, a larger sample closer to 300 would have had a better representation of the target population, Gen Z.

Another consideration to take into account is that the survey statements were randomized in the sense that the positive version of the statement and the negative versions varied on what size of the Bipolar scale they were on throughout the survey. For instance, sometimes 1 was the negative options and sometimes 1 was the positive option. However, the varying in the direction of the scales were consistent for each statement in the brand and the influencer versions. This was done to prevent people from aimlessly clicking down the survey to fill in

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responses. However, people who were not paying attention may have assumed that each statement ran negative to positive as commonly found. This could have had some effect on the data reported.

This experiment also only tested one type of organic cosmetic, a moisturizer. It would have been beneficial to run the experiment with various types of organic cosmetics if there had been more time.

### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

To explore further research on this topic, I would like to gather a random sample of Gen Z. This would be beneficial to understand if the same trends are revealed with a more representative sample. It would also help to reveal if there was a slight bias towards the goodwill of businesses since business students were a majority of participants.

I would run the same experiment but test it with a different type of cosmetic, such as sunscreen. This would be beneficial to ensure that the same relationship between the brand and persuasion are consistent for all types of organic cosmetics.

In addition, I would like to conduct a similar experiment but utilize different social media platforms. My next steps would be to run the same experiment but on Facebook. The advertisements would be generally the same, but the format would be changed to fit Facebook's post structure. This would be beneficial to understand if these trends are consistent across all social media platforms or if they are specific to Instagram because that is the predominate location for social media marketing.

Finally, I would like to run a similar experiment on Instagram but utilizing video advertisements instead of images. This research would be beneficial to understand if the same trends are seen when the brand and influencer are "talking" to the consumer. The true meaning of messages can be lost or hidden when written down. Speaking enables cadence and fluctuation in tone. It also can express a lot more emotion than written words to deliver a more effective message. Would goodwill and authenticity shine through more for an influencer when they can "talk" to the consumer?

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**APPENDICES**

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Appendix A – Organic Cosmetic Survey

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Start of Block: consent form

**1. Statement of purpose**

You are invited to participate in a study on advertising. We hope to learn how you evaluate advertisements. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are 18 years or older.

**2. Description, Including Risks and Benefits**

If you decide to participate, we will conduct an experiment involving the following procedures: This study may contain different tasks such as: viewing advertisements and answering questions. This study will take up to 5-20 minutes. There is no risk in participating in this study beyond those experienced in everyday life.

**3. Confidentiality**

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the general public in a way that can be traced to you. In any written reports or publications, no participant other than the researchers will be identified, and only anonymous data will be presented.

**4. Statement that Participation Is Voluntary**

Your participation is totally voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bryant University or its employees in any way. If you decide

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to participate, you are also free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships. However, it is requested that you notify the investigator of this.

**5. Persons to Contact**

If you have any questions, please contact Alyssa Belanger at (978)799-8834 or abelanger@bryant.edu. If you have any additional questions later, we will be happy to answer them. You can have a copy of this form to keep.

**6. Signature Indicating Informed Consent**

Please click the button below if you have decided to participate. Clicking the button indicates only that you are at least 18 years of age and have read the information provided above. Clicking the button does not obligate you to participate, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

End of Block: consent form

---

Start of Block: screener

Q13 Are you between 18-23 years old?

Yes

No

*Skip To: End of Survey If Are you between 18-23 years old? = No*

End of Block: screener

---

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Start of Block: brand

Imagine that you are scrolling through your Instagram feed. You come across the post below from Organic Beauty, an organic cosmetic company, promoting their new organic moisturizer.

Please take thirty seconds to view the advertisement. Be sure to read the following questions thoroughly.



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How likely are you to purchase this moisturizer in the post?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	Likely				
Definitely would not	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely would				
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	Probable				

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Take another look at the company post.



How likely are you to search for more information about the moisturizer in the post?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	Likely				
Definitely would not	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely would				
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	Probable				

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How likely are you to tell others about this moisturizer?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	Likely				
Definitely would not	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely would				
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	Probable				

Take another look at the company post.



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How do you rate the company that posted this Instagram post?

	1	2	3	4	5	
has my best interests at heart	<input type="radio"/>	doesn't have my best interests at heart				
concerned with me	<input type="radio"/>	unconcerned with me				

End of Block: brand

---

Start of Block: influencer

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Imagine that you are scrolling through your Instagram feed. You come across the sponsored post below by Bethany Mota, a very popular cosmetic influencer, promoting a new organic moisturizer from Organic Beauty. Please take thirty seconds to view the advertisement. Be sure to read the following questions thoroughly.



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How likely are you to purchase this moisturizer in the post?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	Likely				
Definitely would not	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely would				
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	Probable				

Take another look at the influencer post.



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How likely are you to search for more information about the moisturizer in the post?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	Likely				
Definitely would not	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely would				
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	Probable				

How likely are you to tell others about this moisturizer?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	Likely				
Definitely would not	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely would				
Improbable	<input type="radio"/>	Probable				

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Please take another look at the influencer post.



How do you rate the influencer that posted this Instagram post?

	1	2	3	4	5	
has my best interests at heart	<input type="radio"/>	doesn't have my best interests at heart				
concerned with me	<input type="radio"/>	unconcerned with me				

**End of Block: influencer**

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Start of Block: manipulation

The post that I just saw was from who?

	1 (2)	2 (3)	3 (4)	4 (5)	5 (6)	
From a company	<input type="radio"/>	From an influencer				

End of Block: manipulation

---

Start of Block: Organic Cosmetic Questions

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It is important to me that the cosmetic products I use

	strongly disagree (1)	somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
do not harm the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
are not tested on animals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
are not made from artificial ingredients	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Organic Cosmetic Questions

---

Start of Block: demographics

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What gender do you identify as?

- male
- female
- other
- prefer not to answer

How old are you?

---

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Please specify your ethnicity.

- Caucasian
- African-American
- Latino or Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Island
- Two or more
- Other/unknown
- prefer not to answer

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- some high school
- high school
- some college

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---

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Ph.D. or higher

prefer not to answer

What is your annual household income?

<\$25,000

\$25,000-\$50,000

\$50,000-\$100,000

\$100,000-\$200,000

>\$200,000

prefer not to answer

**End of Block: demo**

---

**Start of Block: Thank**

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---

Thank you very much for your completion of the survey!

End of Block: Thank

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