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University Road, Kolhapur - 416004, Maharashtra State, India.

website : www.siberindia.edu.in

E-mail : editorsajmr@siberindia.edu.in

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Website: www.siberindia.edu.in
Email: csiberpress@siberindia.edu.in
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Micro Celebrities as Influencers by Self Presentation on Social Media Online: Gaining Consumer Equilibrium

Ms. Amla K.K

Research Scholar (Ph.D) Jamal Mohammed
College, Affiliated to Bharathidasan
University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India

Dr. A. Khaleelur Rahman

Associate Professor, Jamal Mohammed
College, Affiliated to Bharathidasan
University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India

Abstract

A lot of research on communication and persuasion has been done using the source credibility model, especially in areas like public relations, political communication, and advertising. In order to better understand how a micro celebrity presents themselves online, the study will look at their influence of factors such as attractiveness, reliability, and experience on what reviews and ratings they post. Respondents received a Google form (online) with a structured questionnaire with seventeen statements. The investigation's final data, which included 231 samples ranging in age from 17 to over 45, was examined. To attempt to achieve the goals of the study, a null hypothesis was generated and tested. Regression analysis was used as a statistical tool to examine the hypothesis. It is evident from the investigation's findings that every null hypothesis was rejected. This research shows that a micro celebrity's level of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise are all major determinants of their online reviews and ratings. The findings also show that, if micro celebrities follow specific guidelines for online activity and self-presentation, customers find them attractive, reliable, and knowledgeable.

Keywords: Brand Image, Micro-Celebrity, Reviews, Rating, Source Credibility.

Introduction

Online influencer endorsement has been the focus of recent marketing and information systems research. Celebrity endorsement has been regularly used for years by businesses of all kinds and in a variety of sectors to draw clients and market goods (Erdogan 1999). Social media platforms have been utilized by multiple sectors and industries as a marketing approach for developing brand values (Christodoulides 2011). Influencers on social media are people who have developed a reputation for themselves and following on social media frequently by specialising in a certain field of interest (Wibisono, m et.al 2023). A study by Djafavora and Trofimenko, O(2019) on how micro-celebrities express themselves on social media is also available. Influencers on Chinese Gen Z's intention to buy through social media are also documented (Chiu, CL and Ho, HC 2023). Electronic word of mouth (eWoM), according to Jin and Phua (2014), influenced consumers' buying intentions based on their attractiveness and expertise as well as their reviews and rating at some extend. According to Ohanian, (1990) Source Credibility is analysed by favorable characteristics of user that affect the receiver's acceptance towards the message conveyed.

In a micro celebrity endorsement, the micro celebrity serves as the brand's spokesperson on their preferred social media channels, encouraging their followers to purchase the products they recommend and The new breed of fame brought forth by social media is referred to as micro celebrities (Khamis et al., 2017). Client testimonials are one approach to get the attention of customers who get overwhelmed with information (Weber L 2009). Macheka, T., Quaye, E. S., & Ligaraba, N. (2024) found a significant correlation between female consumers' buy intentions and celebrity endorsements, reviews, and ratings.

When a consumer decides to buy anything after reading online evaluations and ratings from micro-celebrities, it helps a business or brand acquire customer value, which allows advertisers to improve the perception of their brand (Mythili, G., & Vanitha, P. 2024). Eisend, M. (2006) documents an analysis of source credibility characteristics in marketing communication. According to Jin and Phua's (2014) research, a person's perceived social influence increases with the number of followers they have. One of the key factors influencing microcelebrities is customer attitude towards social media advertising (Chen et al., 2011). Wilcox and Stephen, (2013) refers that, buying tendency is greater in female users compared to male users to buy products that were endorsed by their favourite celebrities. Malek and Ligaraba N (2020) propose that the online activity of Generation Y in the fashion sector influences consumers' purchasing intentions, with online bloggers having a significantly greater influence than traditional media outlets.

Theoretical Background

Micro Celebrity

Micro celebrities are social media influencers who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic (Erdogan, 1999). Micro celebrities are micro influencers who can make regular posts videos about

a particular brand or topic on their preferred social media channels to encourage their followers to buy a products they promote (Cheung, 2012). According to Roy, 2006 micro celebrities are having large following of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention their views. According to Khamis et al (2017) micro celebrities are new type of celebrity created by social media who have built up more significant followers. Micro celebrities are generally have high profile and can be excellent at raising awareness among public as one of the profitable marketing communication strategies. Micro-celebrities, sometimes referred to as internet celebrities or social media influencers, are people who have developed a sizable fan base on social media sites like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or Twitter.

Source Credibility Model

Source credibility model is considered to be the most powerful and most suitably applicable for the purpose of this research. Ohanian, (1990) detailed that source credibility model is the most known model among various models attempted to explain the dimensions of celebrity endorsement and attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise are the major dimensions of source credibility model in terms of celebrity endorsement. Various studies suggested that (Djafarova&Rushworth, 2017; Ohanian, 1990), audience perceives the source as knowledgeable and can gain expertise in terms of product knowledge through source credibility up to some extent. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communications has created appropriate influence on brand attitude in terms of perceived credibility.

Fifteen sub-credibility factors are considered highly significant in context of visuals in social media and in terms of issue of trust within the online platform (Till &Busler, 2000). According to Ohanian (1991), the details of the sub-credibility factors are as follows.

- Attractiveness/Similarity; attractive, beautiful, classy, sexy and elegant.
- Trustworthiness; trustworthy, dependable, sincere, reliable and honest.
- Expertise; expert, knowledgeable, qualified, experienced and skilled.

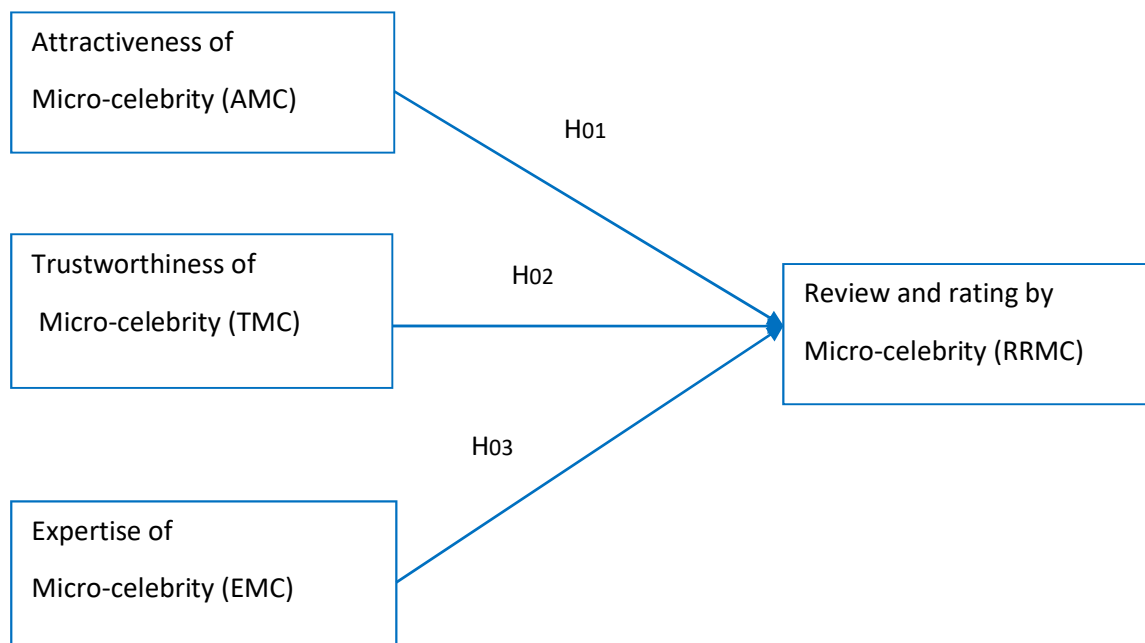


Figure 1. Source Credibility Mode

Research Methodology

Participants

The present study is based on the primary data collected from respondents of different age groups located in the rural and urban areas of South Kerala. This place attracts consumers to buy the different branded products and services.

Table 1. Demographic details of the respondents

	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	93	40.3
	male	138	59.7
Age	17-25	68	29.4
	26-35	86	37.2
	36-45	52	22.5
	More than 45	25	10.8
Education	Any Other	61	26.4
	PG	59	25.5
	UG	111	48.1
Region of Residence	Rural	153	66.2
	Urban	78	33.8

Source: Author work

Demographic details of the respondent are given in Table.1. The gender profile is categorised in to males and females, which constitutes the percentage of 59.7 and 40.3 respectively. Four categories of age groups are included i.e., 17-25, 26-35, 36-45 and more than 45 years of age. The participation percentage is 29.4, 37.2, 22.5 and 10.8 respectively. Educational qualification of respondent is divided in to three categories namely UG, PG and any other, which constitutes the percentage of 48.1, 25.5 and 26.4 respectively. Region of residence is divided in to two categories i.e. rural and urban, which constitutes 66.2 and 33.8 percentage respectively. Table1 shows that age group of 17 to 45 are most active in social media and involves in brand selection and purchasing things.

Construct Measurement

There are three constructs to analyse the study based on source credibility model i.e construct attractiveness, construct trustworthiness and construct expertise respectively. Construct attractiveness comprises sub-credibility sources like similarity, likeability and familiarity with respondent. Construct trustworthiness comprises sub-credibility sources like trustworthiness, dependability, sincerity, honesty and reliability. Construct expertise comprises sub-credibility sources like skills, experience, expertise, qualified and knowledge.

Table.2. Mean, SD, Factor Loading Statistics Measurement Items

	Mean	SD	FSW	SRW
Review and rating by micro-celebrity (RRMC)				
RRMC1	4.05	0.702	0.1308	0.5386
RRMC2	3.9	0.790	0.0825	0.4359
RRMC3	3.59	0.801	0.2204	0.7143
Attractiveness of micro-celebrity (AMC)				
AMC1	3.53	0.898	0.0802	0.4789
AMC2	3.51	0.859	0.1024	0.5387
AMC4	3.69	0.789	0.1299	0.5833
Trustworthiness of micro-celebrity (TMC)				
TMC1	3.53	0.848	0.1516	0.6546
TMC3	3.48	0.913	0.0981	0.5533
TMC4	3.49	0.854	0.1295	0.6139
TMC5	3.42	0.886	0.2329	0.7642
Expertise of micro-celebrity (EMC)				
EMC1	3.42	0.943	0.1679	0.695

EMC2	3.63	0.918	0.1923	0.7206
EMC3	3.67	0.827	0.1164	0.5607
EMC4	3.52	0.927	0.1613	0.6809
EMC5	3.81	0.777	0.1326	0.5805

Source: Author work

SD; standard deviation, SRW; standard regression weight, FSW; factor score weights

Research Instrument

In order to understand, whether the reviews and ratings given by micro-celebrities in social media as self-presentation are reliable, trustworthy, familiar, and similar and do the customers find these reviews and rating useful, clear and understandable, a structured questionnaire was used, which contain 17 statements to analyse the impact of review and rating given by micro celebrity as eWOM in social media on consumer endorsement and the data of this research is collected through Google forms. Each statement is analysed using Five-point Likert scale. First point being (strongly agree) and fifth point being (strongly disagree).

Data Collection and Sampling

More than 750 individuals were provided with the Google form (online) questionnaire. Out of 260 responses 231 responses were found appropriate for the current research. Only 30.8% of people have responded in the final. To evaluate the hypothesis, the researcher used confirmatory factor analysis and regression analysis.

Hypothesis of the Study

H01: The review and rating given by micro celebrity (RRMC) does not get affected by attractiveness of micro celebrity (AMC)

H1: The review and rating given by micro celebrity (RRMC) gets affected by attractiveness of micro celebrity (AMC)

H02: There is no significant impact of trustworthiness of micro celebrity (TMC) on review and rating given by micro celebrity (RRMC)

H2: There is a significant impact of trustworthiness of micro celebrity (TMC) on review and rating given by micro celebrity (RRMC)

H03: The review and rating given by micro celebrity (RRMC) does not get affected by expertise of micro celebrity (EMC)

H3: The review and rating given by micro celebrity (RRMC) gets affected by expertise of micro celebrity (EMC)

Table 3. Correlation matrix

	TMC	AMC	EMC	RRMC
TMC	1.000			
AMC	0.811**	1.000		
EMC	0.749**	0.809**	1.000	
RRMC	0.606**	0.786**	0.377**	1.000

Source: Author work

** indicates the values are significant for $\alpha = 0.05$.

Correlation values of the construct are given in Table 3. TMC, AMC and EMC are correlated with RRMC, which are significant with $\alpha = 0.05$. Table 3 confirm that, the correlation AMC and RRMC (0.786**), AMC and EMC (0.809**), TMC and AMC (0.811**).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Reliability

The alpha value for the questionnaire utilised for this investigation is 0.913, which is thought to be sufficient to continue the planned study. According to Pooja and Sunil Kumar (2021) and other researchers investigations, even values of 0.7 in social sciences will be regarded as relevant. Alpha value of attractiveness AMC is 0.780, which is significant. The alpha value of trustworthiness TMC and expertise EMC is 0.836 and 0.852

respectively. The RRMIC's alpha value is 0.811, which is acceptable. All of the alpha values were deemed significant to continue this study. The reliability score of the survey needs to be more than 0.75. Murphy and Davidshofer (1988) defined reliability as insufficient at 0.6, poor at 0.7, moderate to high at 0.8-0.9, and high at >0.9.

Table 4. Fit Indices of Attractiveness of micro-celebrity, Trustworthiness of micro-celebrity, Expertise of micro-celebrity and review and rating by micro celebrity

Fit Indices	Estimated Value	Recommended Value	Reference
Chi-Square	<i>P-Value = 0.00</i>	P-Value > 0.00	Meyers et al, 2005
CMIN/DF	2.1168	< 5.0	Marsh &Hocevar, 1985
GFI	0.9139	> 0.90	Chau, 1997
RMSEA	0.0697	< 0.80	Byrne, 2001
RMR	0.0448	< 0.05	Meyers et al, 2005
PNFI	0.6508	> 0.5	Meyers et al, 2005
AGFI	0.877	> 0.80	Hair et al, 2009

Source: Research Output

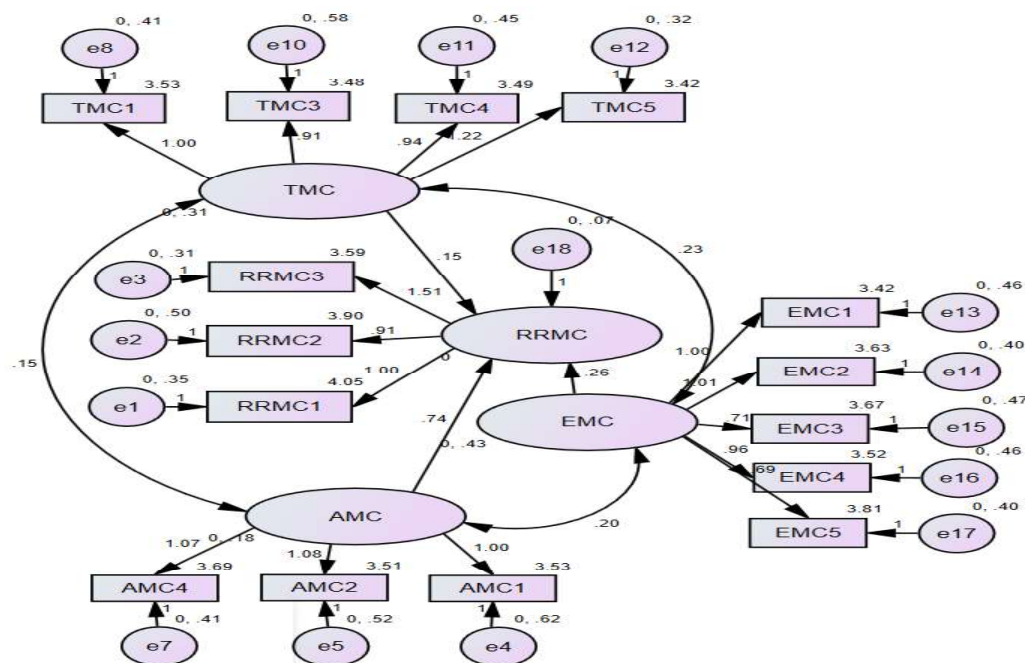


Figure.2. Path Analysis

These path analysis values are estimated using the goodness of fit and badness of fit indices. The GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) model fit value is 0.913, which is suitable for this model due to its value should be more than 0.90 according to Chaul, 1997. RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error Approximation) values should be less than 0.8 (Byrne, 2001) which denotes badness of fit index. The present study RMSEA value is 0.669, which satisfies the badness of fit. The value of CMN/DF is 2.11, which can be considerable for this model because its value should be less than 5.0 (Marsh and Hocover, 1995). The value of RMR(Root Mean Square Residuals) PNFI (Parsimony Normed Fit Index), AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) also satisfy goodness of fit index. The value of RMR is 0.044, which should be less than 0.05 (Meyers.et.al 2005).The value of PNFI is 0.650, which should be more than 0.5(Meyers et al 2005). The value of AGFI is 0.877; and its volume should be more than 0.8 (Hair et al 2009).

Regression Weight (CFA)

The regression weight denotes the importance of each statement in the questionnaire. Table5 shows that, all the statements are significant and their p-values are less than 0.05. It indicates that, all the statements are appropriate for the purpose of the study. The mean value, median value along with its standard deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis are given in Table 6.

Table 5. Regression Weights of measurement items

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value
RRMC	<---	AMC	0.7418	0.2753	2.6942	0.0071
RRMC	<---	TMC	0.1515	0.1198	1.2649	0.2059
RRMC	<---	EMC	-0.2609	0.1263	-2.0666	0.0388
RRMC_1	<---	RRMC	1			
RRMC_2	<---	RRMC	0.9106	0.2006	4.5391	***
RRMC_3	<---	RRMC	1.5141	0.2859	5.2965	***
AMC_1	<---	AMC	1			
AMC_2	<---	AMC	1.0759	0.2091	5.1448	***
AMC_4	<---	AMC	1.0699	0.2001	5.3457	***
TMC_1	<---	TMC	1			
TMC_3	<---	TMC	0.9097	0.1326	6.8626	***
TMC_4	<---	TMC	0.9441	0.1266	7.4564	***
TMC_5	<---	TMC	1.2188	0.1426	8.546	***
EMC_1	<---	EMC	1			
EMC_2	<---	EMC	1.0092	0.1109	9.1007	***
EMC_3	<---	EMC	0.7077	0.0961	7.3634	***
EMC_4	<---	EMC	0.9632	0.1106	8.7103	***
EMC_5	<---	EMC	0.6887	0.0907	7.5966	***

Source: Research Output

Table 6. Sample size, Mean, Median, Std. deviation Skewness and Kurtosis

Variables	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
TMC	231	3.75	3.81	0.59	-0.04	-0.07
AMC	231	2.83	2.83	0.37	-0.03	0.22
EMC	231	3.40	3.41	0.57	0.01	0.03
RRMC	231	2.25	2.28	0.31	-0.45	1.59

Source: Research Output

Hypothesis Testing

Table 7. Hypothesis test result of regression analysis

	R-Square	Unstandardi zed Beta (B)	Standardized Beta (B)	Std. Error	t	P-Value	Durbin- Watson
Predictors: (Constant), AMC and Dependent Variable: RRMC (H1: Rejected)	0.618	0.667	0.786	0.035	19.2	0	1.896

Predictors: (Constant), TME and Dependent Variable: RRCE (H2 : Rejected)	0.367	0.318	0.606	0.028	11.5	0	1.724
Predictors: (Constant), EMC and Dependent Variable: RRMCM (H3: Rejected)	0.142	0.206	0.377	0.033	6.16	0	1.795

Source: Research Output

The Table 7 shows that AMC has significant impact on RRMCM. In this case, the value of P is 0.000, indicating that, the null hypothesis H1 is rejected. The result of this study reveals that, attractiveness of micro celebrity has a significant impact on the reviews and rating given by micro celebrity. TMC also has significant impact on RRMCM. Here the p-value is 0.000 and hence the null hypothesis H2 is rejected. This results also reveals that, the trustworthiness of micro celebrity has a significant impacts on the reviews and rating given by micro celebrity. Table 7 also included that, EMC has also has inevitable impact on RRMCM. Here the value of P is again 0.000 and hence the null hypothesis H3 is rejected. This result reveals that, expertise of micro celebrity has a significant impact on the reviews and rating given by micro celebrity. Plot for regression analysis is given in Figure 1.

Findings

There are four set of questions in which first set is on reviews and rating given by micro celebrity, second set of questions is related to attractiveness of micro celebrity, third set of questions is on trustworthiness of micro celebrity and fourth set of questions is on expertise of micro celebrity. The result shows that, attractiveness of micro celebrity has significant impact on reviews and rating given by micro celebrity. $P=0.000$ and $R^2= 0.618$ confirms null hypothesis has been rejected. It means the attractiveness of micro celebrity positively influences reviews and rating by micro celebrity. The result shows that trustworthiness of micro celebrity has substantial impact on reviews and rating by micro celebrity. $P=0.000$ and $R^2 = 0.367$ shows null hypothesis has been rejected. Trustworthiness has also positively influences the reviews and rating by micro celebrity. The result shows that expertise of micro celebrity has substantial impact on review and rating given by micro celebrity. $P=0.000$ and $R^2 = 0.142$ shows null hypothesis has been rejected. Expertise of micro celebrity has also an important attribute to decide the brand selection.

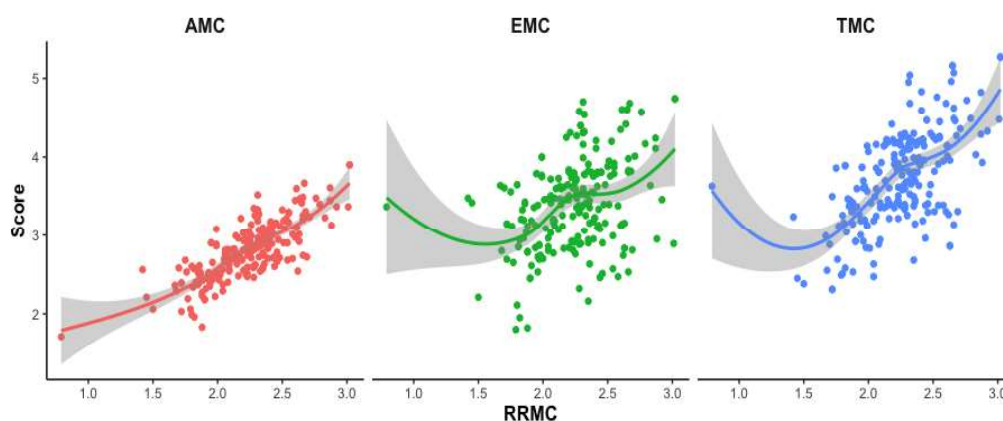


Figure 2.Plot for regression analysis

Discussion

For a business to succeed in a competitive marketplace, it is crucial to understand consumer behaviour patterns and the underlying causes. Understanding Consumer tastes and the marketing communication process can be used efficiently and forcefully to influence consumers' purchasing decisions. The main reason of adopting the concept of micro celebrity is that, the extent of the message among public especially among younger generations. According to Kumar, S. K. (2021) Zhang et al (2018), consumer prefer the brand or products based on the source credibility of the consumer endorser. The results of this research make it clear that trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise are positively correlated with reviews and ratings.

Micro celebrity is the one who has used the preferred social media platforms to encourage their large number of followers as well as other customers to buy products they promote. The aim of the study was to assess whether rating and reviews given by micro celebrity is advised by the followers or consumers and accordingly do they find it attractive, trustworthy and relevant expertise. The study used regression analysis to test the hypothesis. The aforementioned regression value clearly showed that all hypotheses were rejected. The finding of the study reveals that attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of micro celebrity influence the review and rating by micro celebrity. The finding of the study is useful for marketing managers in e-commerce; different firms engaged in advertisement planning and brand management. Companies frequently utilise reviews and ratings as part of their advertising because reviews and ratings are straightforward, accurate, credible, affordable, and time-efficient ways to influence customers' buying decisions.

Conclusion, Future Scope of the Study and Limitations

The results of this study illustrate that social media users follow microcelebrities on online platforms. Respondents believe that in order for micro celebrities to effectively advocate products, they would need to be credible, inspiring, clever, innovative, and professional in their posts. Researchers have used the source credibility model to explain how expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness affect reviews and ratings. The investigators of this study evaluated the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of three source credibility model components. Future research is concerned; this source credibility model can be used in different industries especially in tourism sectors. Region wise study can be added in future research. However, there are some shortcomings to this study as well. Only those individuals residing in the specific areas of South Kerala (both urban and rural) were selected for the sample using a Google form (online). The study examines empirically, because it totally based on consumer belief, attitude etc. Finally, another limitation is that, there is no quantitative information collected during the entire study, hence quantitative techniques can be applied in future research.

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