Examining the Characteristics of Opinion Leaders: Antecedents and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The cosmetic market is one of the largest contributors to waste water, ocean and soil pollution. However, some cosmetic companies are making sustainable efforts by producing environmentally friendly products, packaging to reduce plastic waste or producing organic products. Otherwise, the biggest challenge for sustainable beauty brands is to create value in the market since there is lower consumer confidence in buying environmentally friendly beauty products. Social media can be an opportunity to inform consumers and opinion leaders on social media can be trusted sources of information in influencing consumers. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the role of opinion leaders in educating customers about sustainable beauty. The research aims to increase opinion leaders' role in educating customers about sustainable beauty products to follow their advice. This study involved 413 respondents who have followed some beauty influencers on social media. The data were analyzed with SmartPLS 3.0. The study's results showed that perceived uniqueness and quantity have proven to influence opinion leaders' perceptions while perceived quality and originality do not impact perceived opinion leaders. The opinion leaders' perception also significantly impacts the intention to follow the advice. This study gives insight into what shapes the intention to follow the opinion leader's advice.

Keywords: Perceived opinion leaders, sustainable beauty, intention to follow the advice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on The Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the cosmetics industry in Indonesia has potential market growth to 21.9% in 2023, with a potential market size nationally reaching 467,919 products or an increase of more than 10 times in the last five years. Meanwhile, globally it is estimated to reach USD 473.21

billion by 2028 with an average growth of 5.5% per year (Limanseto, 2024) with the total revenue of the cosmetics industry in the period 2021-2024 estimated to increase by 48% (Waluyo, 2024). The growth of the cosmetics industry in Indonesia has increased due to the growing awareness of   people in taking care of themselves and paying attention to their appearance. This encourages the growth of local and international cosmetic brands. Competition between local and international cosmetic products is inevitable and every brand strives to find value that distinguishes them from competitors and attract the attention of consumers to gain a wider market size. Some brands focus on marketing strategies that have great potential opportunity to attract their customers. A survey by Vettese of 520 beauty enthusiasts stated that 62% of women are followers of beauty influencers on social media and 67% stated that social media influencers are their main source of information when looking for the latest information about beauty products (Gerdeman, 2022). In Indonesia, 78% of women are more interested in local influencers to be their inspiration in researching information and buying beauty products (Zap, 2023). This makes the cosmetics industry pay attention to efforts in utilizing social media as one of the ways to be able to market beauty products. The development of social media is able to open up opportunities for collaboration between beauty product and beauty influencers to increase value in consumers' perspective through increasing the number of audiences so as to become more visible on social media. Collaboration with beauty influencers can improve the image of the product because the brand is well-built by beauticians who have a good reputation and credibility. This also enhances consumer trust because beauty influencers are considered trustworthy people in conveying information rather than the information conveyed by the company. Some influencers are entitled opinion leaders, namely someone who has the ability to influence people around them because they are experts in certain fields or are famous, such as celebrities in online and offline media. Reviews conducted by opinion leaders are considered more trusted by consumers than advertisements delivered by the companies (Gerdeman, 2022). Therefore, opinion leaders have a significant role in the cosmetics industry because they can increase product sales by providing reviews of beauty products based on their actual product experience and expertise in the field of beauty products (He and Jin, 2024). For this reason, the identification of the role of opinion leaders in the cosmetics industry needs to be reviewed more deeply.

The increasing trend of public awareness in Indonesia on social and environmental issues has encouraged several brands to enter the eco-friendly beauty industry. Consumers in Indonesia are also increasingly using halal-certified and environmentally friendly products in their skincare routines. Environmental awareness is a major consideration among consumers, especially adult and the younger generation female (Ventures, 2024). Environmental issues related to the cosmetics industry are becoming a global issue because the cosmetics industry impacts our environment in several ways and are among the most significant contributors to waste water, ocean, and soil pollution. However, many cosmetic companies are starting to consider their environmental impact and seeking to make sustainable efforts by producing environmentally friendly products, representing packaging to reduce plastic waste or producing organic products.

Indonesian women use beauty products as part of their daily activities, which has fostered an increase in the cosmetics industry in Indonesia by 9.61% (Hasibuan, 2022). The market potential encourages the growth of several local or international beauty product brands that offer different values. Each brand strives to offer value in the market, one of which is sustainable beauty. Sustainable beauty is using beauty products

that are safe and friendly to the environment (Asih, 2022). Therefore, some sustainable beauty values involve producing products with environmentally friendly compositions, presenting solutions for packaging management to reduce plastic waste, or producing beauty products that contain organic ingredients (Salsabila, 2022). This sustainable beauty product has emerged considering that the beauty industry also negatively impacts the environment, such as with packaging waste and polluting ingredients that are not environmentally friendly (Davison, 2023). The main challenge faced by beauty products that promote the value of sustainable beauty is the low consumer confidence in buying environmentally friendly beauty products.

A survey from Databoks in 2022 shows that the types of eco-friendly products most commonly purchased by Indonesians are food (56%), household products (47.8%), and clothing (37.4%) (Rizaty, 2022). It can be seen that environmentally friendly beauty products still need to be more attractive to people in Indonesia. For this reason, a marketing strategy is necessary to help sustainable beauty products expand the market and increase consumer intention to purchase.

The growth of social media recently can be an opportunity for sustainable beauty product manufacturers to convey information to their consumers about their value. This is also reinforced by the number of social media users in Indonesia, which has reached 195.32 million users (Statista, 2024); this is an opportunity for business owners as a promotional medium. A survey from Zap (2023) shows that 51.9% of women in Indonesia access TikTok to find information about beauty products.

TikTok can be an appropriate medium to enhance Indonesian people's awareness of sustainable beauty products. TikTok's high engagement rate also supports this compared to other social media platforms, which have an 18% engagement rate (Indonesia, 2022). In the current environment, where information flows quickly, some users have a high ability to influence the opinions of others or direct them to a particular topic due to their experience and charisma to influence their followers. TikTok provides a fundamental communication platform that facilitates community interaction and is a potential medium for educating Indonesian women on the value of sustainable beauty. Several industries, such as the scientific, financial, technological, environmental, beauty, and health fields, require opinion leaders (Adrianjara, 2022), considering that these fields require more information to educate their market. The owners of sustainable beauty products can also utilize opinion leaders as trusted individuals with expertise in certain fields and they can influence many people in helping make decisions (Adrianjara, 2022). It can drive companies' interest in finding users who can increase their profits through advertising, which can enhance product adoption by attracting potential customers. Hence, opinion leaders are reflected in a path to strategic marketing to influence the audience (Iyengar, van den Bulte and Valente, 2011).

However, only 27% of women in Indonesia use reviews to be involved with beauty products (Zap, 2022). According to Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020), opinion leaders can be trusted sources of information in influencing consumers to follow the message conveyed. For this reason, it is necessary to increase the role of opinion leaders in educating the Indonesian people about sustainable beauty.

In addition, several studies that review opinion leaders have been conducted in various fields, such as politics (Tsang and Rojas, 2020), beauty (Coulter, Feick and Price, 2002), organic food (Al-Harbi and Badawi, 2022), and in online learning communities (Li et al., 2013). However, there has been little research on opinion leaders regarding sustainable beauty products. Therefore, this study examines the role of opinion leaders in persuading customers to have the confidence to purchase sustainable beauty products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Opinion Leader

Technological advancement encourages changes in marketing strategies. Digital media is an exciting medium for sharing information with brand owners. Consumers are becoming more exposed to various information available through digital media, such as social media. Thus, this then encourages the emergence of opinion leaders among consumers. According to Leal, Hor-Meyll and de Paula PessÔa (2014), an opinion leader is someone who has characteristics such as having expertise in a particular field, being an active member in a particular community, actively contributing to substantial things, or is considered to have expertise by other people and who can help then in making a buying decision. Someone who is considered an opinion leader usually easily influences other people to follow what is recommended (Iyengar, van den Bulte and Valente, 2011). This then encourages followers' intention to follow all advice given by opinion leaders, such as influencing consumers' intention to purchase (Rahman et al., 2014). In regard to sustainable beauty products, if opinion leaders can offer sufficient and helpful information, it will encourage followers to follow the advice. The more content influencers contribute to give insight, the more followers will be attracted to follow the advice (Wu et al., 2021).
H1: Perceived opinion leaders positively influence the intention to follow the advice

2.2 Perceived Originality and Perceived Uniqueness

Social media can encourage someone to create various exciting content. The more attractive the content, the higher the chance of getting more followers. However, this does not necessarily make the content creator an opinion leader. The specific characteristics of the content created in social media can affect the consumer's perceptions. Originality is one of the characteristics   taken into consideration and represents   the degree of novelty that some influencers achieve by performing specific actions (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020). Originality is the extent to which these actions are perceived as unusual, innovative, and sophisticated (Derbaix and Vanhamme, 2003). Thus, this then encourages them to continue following each piece of content and fosters a sense of trust so that the content creator can then become an opinion leader as a reference in making decisions (Derbaix and Vanhamme, 2003). Creating original content can encourage the success of collaborating brand owners and form the perception that the content creator is someone who is an expert in their field.
H2: Perceived originality positively influences on perceived opinion leaders

In general, everyone wants themselves to look different from others. This difference will illustrate how visible they are. Consumers also want the same things, and each individual always wants different things from other people. The uniqueness is defined as a person feeling distinctive from other people (Maslach et al., 1985) and involves using behavior that will cause others to pay attention. Since the need for differentiation is high,   this study uses the Consumer Need For Uniqueness (CNFU) (Ruvio, Shoham and Brenčič, 2008) as a basis to craft the uniqueness.

This is related to the extent to which these behaviors are perceived as being precise and different. Consequently, having uniqueness can build a good self-image since many followers will admire it (Gentina, Shrum and Lowrey, 2016). It has been used as a way to distinguish between opinion leaders and non-leaders (Tsang and Zhou, 2005). The

influencer looks to be radically different from others, with the purpose of enhancing their own self-image and social image (Ruvio, Shoham and Brenčič, 2008) to appear as an opinion leader.
H3: Perceived uniqueness positively influences perceived opinion leaders

2.3 Perceived Quality and Perceived Quantity

Social media also influence the perceived quality (Pham and Ton, 2022). Quality content displayed on social media illustrates that the content creator has expertise in that field and is trusted as a reference in making decisions. The quality of the content created is an essential part of building a good reputation, and this can encourage followers to consider him as an opinion leader (Leal, Hor-Meyll and de Paula PessÔa, 2014). The ability to present interesting information in each piece of content is also a consideration for a content creator to become an opinion leader (Huffaker, 2010).
H4: Perceived quality positively influences perceived opinion leaders

Consumers can access a large number of online reviews to get better information about the product or service they are considering purchasing. The higher the activity of content creators in uploading content and responding to followers, the greater their ability to influence other people (Huffaker, 2010). Thus, this supports a content creator to become an opinion leader.
H5: Perceived quantity positively influences perceived opinion leaders

2.4 Research Framework

Following the formulated hypotheses, this study will examine the impact of opinion leader characteristics on behavior intention to follow the advice. Thus, the following research framework as shown in figure 1. The framework was adopted from Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020):
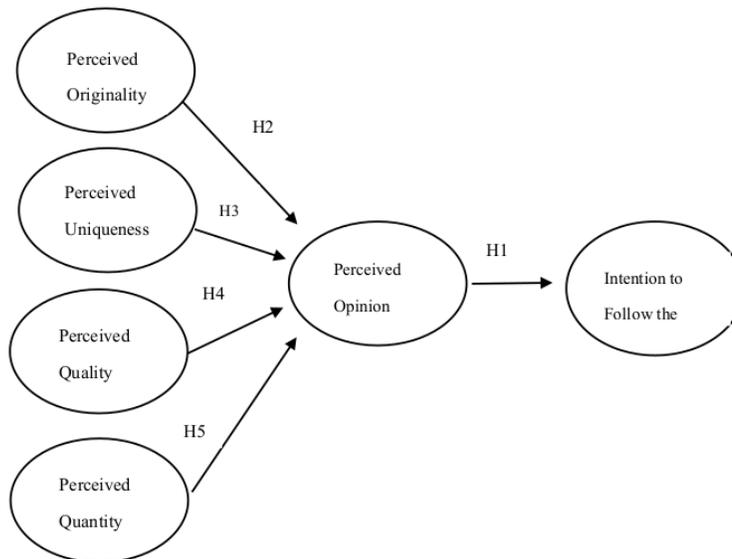

Figure 1. Research Framework

3. METHOD

This research adopted a descriptive research design. The study had 539 sample respondents, of which 413 were valid respondents who were TikTok followers of beauty influencers who have seen reviewed sustainable beauty products but have yet to purchase this product. A nonprobability sampling with a judgmental sampling technique is considered in this study because it does not allow framing of the population, and the sample is selected based on specific criteria determined by the author (Malhotra, Nunan and Birks, 2017). The number of samples has met the minimum sample requirements according to Hair et al. (2017), with a rule of 5 to 10 times the number of indicators to calculate the minimum sample size. Under this guidance, the recommended sample size to assure a stable maximum probability estimate (MLE) is 10 times the number of indicators. Therefore, the minimum requirement for the number of respondents is 200 due to the 20 indicators used. We obtained the responses from the respondents using an online questionnaire that included profiling, screening, and an indicator section to measure the construct. This study uses a 7-point Likert scale, which describes statements from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The research framework includes six constructs: perceived originality, perceived uniqueness, perceived quality, perceived quantity, perceived opinion leader, and intention to follow the advice. We relied on Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez's (2020) study to explain each construct and develop an indicator. The data will be analyzed by implementing the two-stage variance-based partial least squares using SmartPLS software.

4. RESULT

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

		Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	100%
Age	17 – 23 years old	81%
	24 – 30 years old	14%
	31 – 37 years old	4%
	More than 37 years old	1%
Budget to purchase beauty product	Rp 50.000 – Rp150.000	19%
	Rp 151.000 – Rp250.000	31%
	Rp 251.000 – Rp350.000	26%

	Rp 351.000 – Rp450.000	13%
	More than Rp 450.000	11%
Frequency to access TikTok to follow the review	1 – 3 times	48%
	4 – 6 times	36%
	7 – 9 time	9%
	More than 9 times	7%
Preferences of beauty product reviews on TikTok	Face Category (*Primer, Foundation, Powder, Contour, Shimmer, Blush on*)	27%
	Eyes Category (*Eyeshadow, Eyeliner, Eyebrow*)	13%
	Lips Category (Lipstick, *Lipgloss, Liptint, Lipbalm*)	25%
	Skin Care (*Moisturizer, Cream, Serum, Masker*)	35%
Former Knowledge of Sustainable Beauty	Beauty products that do not contain any ingredients from animals (Vegan).	17%
	Beauty product with natural ingredients	27%
	Beauty product with sustainable packaging	28%
	Beauty product with environmental concern	28%
Beauty Influencer on TikTok	Tasya Farasya (3.5M)	34%
	Dilla Jaidi (1.5M)	8%
	Sabrina Chairunnisa (739.1K)	6%
	Jane Christina Simangunsong (2.8M)	4%
	Rachel Goddard (553.7K)	10%
	Dillah Probokusumo (1.9M)	6%
	Jharna Bhagwani (11.2M)	7%

Nanda Arsyinta (2.8M)	10%	
Maria Clarin (1.1M)	5%	
Asyifa Nadya Ivan (1.2M)	2%	
Jessica Jeha (1.6M)	4%	
Janice Samantha (1.6M)	4%	

As shown in Table 1, the entire sample is women who have seen sustainable beauty reviews, with the majority aged between 17-23 years (81%), with a budget for purchasing beauty products of IDR 151,000-IDR 250,000 (31%), and they have sufficient knowledge about sustainable beauty products and access TikTok 1-3 times a day (48%) to see beauty product reviews, especially face products (27%) and the majority are TikTok followers of Tasya Farasya.

4.1 Measurement (Outer) Model
First, the measurement model analysis must be carried out, looking at internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity before examining the structural model.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency

Variables	Indicators	Outer Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Perceived Originality	PO1	0.797	0.610	0.785	0.789
	PO2	0.845			
	PO3	0.701			
	PO4	0.783			
Perceived Uniqueness	PU1	0.837	0.743	0.827	0.830
	PU2	0.885			
	PU3	0.863			
Perceived Quality	PQL1	0.846	0.697	0.782	0.783
	PQL2	0.820			
	PQL3	0.838			
Perceived Quantity	PQT1	0.841	0.702	0.789	0.796

	PQT2	0.853			
	PQT3	0.820			
Perceived Opinion Leader	POL1	0.818	0.653	0.822	0.825
	POL2	0.816			
	POL3	0.857			
	POL4	0.737			
Intention to Follow the Advice	ITA1	0.877	0.744	0.828	0.831
	ITA2	0.876			
	ITA3	0.834			

Convergent validity will be analyzed for two parameters: average variance extracted (AVE) and outer loadings. Table 2 states that the convergent validity condition was achieved, proven by the scores of all AVE above 0.5 and the scores of outer loadings above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). For reliability, this study assessed the scores of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, both of which have to be above the minimum threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 2, the reliability of the construct is also achieved.

Table 3. Cross Loading

	ITA	PO	POL	PQL	PQT	PU
ITA1	0.877	0.613	0.662	0.609	0.584	0.562
ITA2	0.876	0.585	0.622	0.548	0.561	0.533
ITA3	0.834	0.517	0.593	0.472	0.513	0.508
PO1	0.505	0.797	0.443	0.497	0.46	0.468
PO2	0.54	0.845	0.492	0.564	0.496	0.505
PO3	0.464	0.691	0.43	0.304	0.427	0.5
PO4	0.559	0.783	0.477	0.603	0.551	0.522
POL1	0.603	0.472	0.818	0.353	0.542	0.553
POL2	0.577	0.526	0.816	0.434	0.494	0.517
POL3	0.608	0.477	0.857	0.399	0.508	0.538
POL4	0.558	0.432	0.737	0.488	0.483	0.405

PQL1	0.526	0.547	0.437	0.846	0.472	0.407
PQL2	0.534	0.485	0.417	0.82	0.483	0.415
PQL3	0.522	0.559	0.435	0.838	0.548	0.486
PQT1	0.513	0.503	0.526	0.47	0.841	0.487
PQT2	0.586	0.553	0.575	0.551	0.853	0.544
PQT3	0.508	0.503	0.468	0.484	0.82	0.529
PU1	0.523	0.527	0.515	0.423	0.474	0.837
PU2	0.533	0.558	0.567	0.467	0.565	0.885
PU3	0.549	0.566	0.534	0.461	0.562	0.863

Discriminant validity was analyzed with cross-loading, and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. In the cross-loading criterion, the score must be above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). Table 3 states that all items' scores are above the minimum requirement.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker

	P. Originality	P. Uniqueness	P. Quality	P. Quantity	P. Opinion Leader	Intention to Follow the Advice
P. Originality	0.863					
P. Uniqueness	0.664	0.781				
P. Quality	0.726	0.591	0.808			
P. Quantity	0.632	0.636	0.515	0.835		
P. Opinion Leader	0.642	0.621	0.627	0.601	0.838	
Intention to Follow the Advice	0.620	0.639	0.625	0.522	0.620	0.862

From the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 4, it is also apparent that the discriminant validity has been achieved as the scores of AVE are higher than the squared correlation of each construct (Hair et al., 2017).

4.2 Structural Model

After conducting the first step for the measurement (outer model) test, structural model evaluation will be performed.
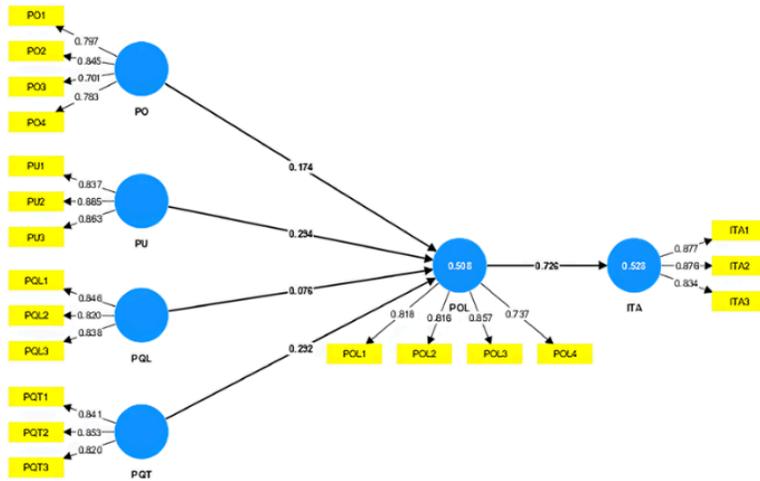

Figure 2. Structural Model

Table 5. Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	p-value	Decision	Adj R^2
H_1	POL → ITA	0.726	0.000	Significant	0.527
H_2	PO → POL	0.174	0.006	Not Significant	
H_3	PU → POL	0.294	0.000	Significant	0.504
H_4	PQL → POL	0.078	0.100	Not Significant	
H_5	PQT → POL	0.292	0.000	Significant	

The result of the hypothesis testing is presented in Table 5 and Figure 2. All hypotheses except hypotheses 2 and 4 are supported. Firstly, it found that two variables' proposed antecedents are proven to be able to influence perceived opinion leaders. These antecedents are perceived uniqueness (β = 0.294, p < 0.000) and perceived quantity (β = 0.292, p < 0.000). Then, perceived quality and originality do not significantly affect perceived opinion leaders with p > 0.005. Meanwhile, the perceived opinion leader (β = 0.726, p < 0.05) significantly influences the intention to follow the advice.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

5.1 Discussion and Implication

The results of this study reveal that these antecedents of perceived opinion leaders are perceived uniqueness, perceived quantity, and the impact on the intention to follow the advice.

Opinion leaders can use TikTok social media to disseminate information to customers (Nunes et al., 2018). They can express high levels of involvement in products related to them. They create massive amounts of content on social media and tend to be technically competent (Jansson et al., 2017). Generally, consumers look for opinion leaders when deciding whether to buy a product, gain knowledge, reduce the risk of uncertainty, and try to save time searching for information (Tobon and García-Madariaga, 2021). The quantity-related information designed by influencers creates potential opportunities to become an opinion leader in the future. The results are also strengthened by the finding by Fakhreddin and Foroudi (2022). In addition, an influencer with a great deal of content can become an opinion leader from the consumer's perspective by creating unique content. Education to raise consumer awareness about sustainable beauty can be presented uniquely and interestingly. Something unique and different will be more attractive to consumers. They will be interested in seeing each uploaded content and then this will become a reference for finding information about environmentally friendly beauty products. This finding also aligns with a prior study by Fakhreddin and Foroudi (2022). An influencer with a strong identity and sufficient confidence to express that identity in their content contributes to developing desirable identities. Influencers need to shape their specific content for their identity that others are likely to admire and consult (Chan and Misra, 1990). Sustainable beauty also adopts the concepts of reduce, reuse, and recycle. The influencer could disseminate this attractively and uniquely by using storytelling to convince the customer that the product is safe for the earth and benefits our bodies.

However, this study also states that perceived quality and originality do not impact perceived opinion leaders. Influencers with low-quality content contributions can also make customers feel swamped with unwanted information, resulting in customers withdrawing from using a social media service. This funding is strengthened by the study of Chai, Potdar and Dillon (2009). In addition, although originality increases the spreading of information, it might lead to negative word of mouth when the quality content is perceived to be low (Moldovan, Goldenberg and Chattopadhyay, 2011).

The study also states that perceived opinion leaders positively impact the intention to follow advice. This was strengthened by prior studies from Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020) and Jegham and Bouzaabia (2022). Scholars have examined the idea that opinion leaders significantly shape consumers' preferences and behaviors because consumers perceive them as honest sources of information (Turcotte et al., 2015). The influencers can shape their audience's attitudes and opinions through their posts (De Veirman et al., 2017). Audiences show interest in the influencer and often use it as an information source, and they will follow any advice they provide. It proves that customer education about environmentally friendly beauty products will be more effectively accepted by customers if delivered by opinion leaders. They see opinion leaders as a trusted source of information when they need to raise their knowledge about sustainable beauty. For this reason, business people can utilize opinion leaders as a promotional strategy on social media. Opinion leaders can help explain the environmental impacts caused by beauty products containing chemicals and plastic

packaging. Therefore, further efforts are needed to protect the environment by using sustainable beauty products. They can start educating by regularly uploading information about the importance of using environmentally friendly beauty products to reduce the impact of pollution and provide stimuli that the benefits of environmentally friendly beauty products are no different from beauty products that contain chemicals and due to that functional and emotional value it will impact customers' purchase intention (Rizkalla and Setiadi, 2020). An explanation of the two benefits consumers obtain, namely well-maintained skin and caring for the environment, needs to be conveyed.   Inuzuka (2021) also states that customer orientation is the best indicator to influence the customer.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study can enrich the comprehension of the role of opinion leaders in educating customers about sustainable beauty to enhance awareness and environmentally friendly product purchase intention in Indonesia. The study aims to identify which factors can influence the perceived opinion leaders and the impact of following their advice for environmentally friendly beauty products. Based on the result, perceived uniqueness and quantity significantly influence perceived opinion leaders and their impact on following the advice. This finding can be one of the tools for companies producing environmentally friendly beauty products to formulate an effective strategy for promoting their product on social media.

This study has some limitations that can be improved for further study. One aspect that can be improved is the influencer profiles, in which most of them are beauty influencers chosen to be the subjects of the study. Further research is encouraged to study beauty influencers who focus on sustainable beauty so as to gain a better understanding.

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