

Antecedents & After-Effects of Content Creator-Based Product Placement: Empirical Insights from Bangladesh

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Abstract

Purpose: The emergence of content creators in social media is a comparatively new phenomenon of interest which has rightfully attracted the digital marketers. As they have discovered a new way to connect with the audience it has inevitably led to the advent of content creator-based product placement. The study is designed to propose and test a creator product placement model uncovering the factors determining audiences' attitude and subsequent behavioral responses.

Design/Methodology: The study employed a single-cross sectional design administering a structured questionnaire-based survey on a sample of 385 respondents. A conceptual model was developed showing the hypothesized relationships among specified variables which was validated using Structural Equation Modeling.

Findings: Content preference, relatability, quality, attitude toward creator, parasocial relationship, fit between content and brand and fit between creator and brand are the significant determinants of the attitude toward creator product placement. It in turn influences attitude toward brand and subsequent purchasing intention.

Practical Implication: The proposed framework will aid social media marketers to formulate effective creator marketing strategies to elicit desired behavioral response from the audience. It also enriches the existing body of literature of creator marketing.

Originality/Value: The study endeavors to come up with a comprehensive model to understand the behavior of the target audience toward creator product placement which is relatively unexplored and unidentified.

Keywords: social media marketing, product placement, creator marketing

1. Introduction

The inception of social networking sites or social media is probably one of the most disruptive and paradigm shifting innovations of 21st century. It has predominantly changed how people communicate with each other, collaborate, find and process information, educate themselves, receive entertainment and enjoyment (Aral et al., 2013). The mass adaption and acceptance of social network as a medium of communication, education, and entertainment has given birth to the idea of content creation which gradually turned into profession from passion. Content creation has shifted the power of creation of ideas and innovative contents from large production houses to small, independent producers (Arriagada, 2021). The rising creators throughout social networks have paved the way for digital social media marketers. As soon as the content creators started receiving attention and acclamation; they have been identified as a potential source of information and powerful advocates to promote brands and products by the marketers (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016). Content creators, since then, have started promoting brands and market offerings which gave birth to the idea of creator product placement. Exploration of the aspects of creator product placement is imperative for the marketers for selecting right contents and eligible creators to produce desirable marketing outcomes.

The previous studies are largely based on social media influencer marketing and ignore the creator marketing or creator product placement perspective. The current research aims at investigating the preceding variables determining the behavioral response toward creator-centric product placement in social media. The following section discusses the existing literature to analyze our current knowledge on relevant concepts to identify the knowledge gap.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social media can be defined as “the activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media” (Safko & Pierce, 2014). Social media is recognized as an indisputable principal marketing factor for the success of products and services (Hawkins & Vel, 2013). It has gained recognition and prominence as a highly impactful channel of communication in digital era (Dwivedi et al., 2015). It has the ability to initiate viral communications between consumers by creating communities and fan pages, promotions and public relations (Pentina & Koh, 2012). It has been widely used by companies, irrespective of their size, to demonstrate their strong presence and friendly customer relationship (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Richter and Schäfermeyer (2011) defined social media marketing (SMM) as a marketing strategy involving social platforms to facilitate a two-way communication with the consumers. Jara et al. (2014) viewed social media marketing as a new generation of marketing technique that encourages enhanced attention and consumer engagement through the employment of social network. It revolves around efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages audiences to share it with others (Bajpai et al., 2012). Mangold and Faulds (2009) regarded social media marketing as a ‘hybrid element of the promotion mix’ that has provided companies a new tool of communications to connect with the customers and customers to connect with each other. According to Spiler et al. (2010) the advantages of social media marketing are: wider reach, convenience, selective communication, lower cost, creative variety, inbound transmission ease, and flexibility; while the disadvantages are: lack of privacy, limited reach, lack of technical support, and lack of control.

2.2 Social Media Influencer (SMI) Marketing

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy that employs the influence of key people or opinion leaders to navigate consumers’ brand awareness or purchase intention (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Lou & Uyan, 2019). “A social media influencer is someone who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers- who are of marketing value to brands- by regularly producing valuable content via social media” (Lou & Uyan, 2019).

One of the significant aspects of social media is, it has given power to ‘ordinary’ users and enabled them to establish strong identities and to become brands (Khamis et al., 2016). Social media has created a potential for prominence by creating compelling narratives which can be inspirational, instructive, relatable, and cautionary and to become ‘micro-celebrities’. According to Hearn and Schoenhoff (2016), “The SMI works to generate a form of “celebrity”, capital by cultivating as much attention as possible and crafting an authentic “personal brand” via social networks, which can be subsequently used by companies and advertisers for consumer outreach.” Social media celebrities or models are perceived as more authentic (Stefanone et al., 2010). More importantly, consumers have found to have strong connectedness toward them (Tran & Strutton, 2014). Social media influencers are perceived as more trustworthy than the traditional celebrities (Jin et al., 2019). Deployment of social media influencers or Instafamous for branding has become an essential part of the social media marketing campaign (Veirman et al., 2017). Zhou et al. (2020) discussed six narrative strategies that social media influencers use to create word of mouth: advising, enthusiasm, educating, appraising, amusing, and assembling.

According to Masuda et al. (2022), influencers’ physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, perceived expertise, and parasocial relationship are the factors that determine consumers’ purchasing intention. Influencer generated contents’ informative value, entertainment value, and influencers’ expertise, attractiveness, and similarity positively influence consumers’ brand awareness and purchase intention (Lou & Uyan, 2019). Ghosh (2022) employed qualitative research on Instagram influencers and identified two key influencer skills to successfully capitalize on user-generated contents: relevance and relationship.

2.3 Social Media Content Creators

The term ‘content creators’ is coined to describe digitally enabled cultural producers who create and distribute contents on social media platforms, who have a desire to generate their own “media brands” (Cunningham & Craig, 2019; Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020). A social media content creator is an individual who generates and

shares contents intended to educate or entertain an audience across social media (Gomez, 2022). The emergence of content creators has diminished the traditional power relations (Arriagada, 2021). The culture of 'content creation' has created a technological transformation that has empowered consumers (Jenkins, 2007). Content creators develop contents like images, graphical works, audio and musical contents, videos, live streams, and written works.

The number of content creators is approximately up to 303 million, 45 million of them are professional creators (Wpbeginner, 2023). According to multiple sources, social media influencers and content creators are not the same. Creators create contents for the sake of making contents and sharing it on digital platform, while influencers make content to grow their personal brands and highlight their lives on social media (Influencer Hub, 2023). Influencers create contents with the intention to convince the followers to buy a specific brand, product or service; content creators work with the intention to create engaging contents to educate and inform the target audience (West, 2022).

Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram among others have started formulating schemes that allow creators to earn money (Constantine, 2020). This has led 'digital platform economy' and 'creator economy' to flourish. (Kopf, 2020). The total value of creator economy is estimated to be \$104.2 billion. YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are the platforms contributing most to the creator economy (Wpbeginner, 2023).

2.4 Product Placement

Product Placement can be defined as the incorporation of commercial content into non-commercial settings through a fusion of advertising and entertainment (Levi-Faur & Ginosar, 2010; Williams et al., 2011). Product placement increases brand awareness, brand association, attitudes, and consumer engagement and interaction (Chin & Wilson, 2012). It has positive impact on brand recall, purchase intention, and brand loyalty (Raza & Jalees, 2016). It influences attitude toward ad, brand impression and intention to click (Liu et al., 2015). When it comes to movies; attitude toward the actor, movie, and character, fit between actor and brand, fit between character and brand, fit between movie and brand affect attitude toward product placement which subsequently affects attitude toward the brand (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). Cognitive fit and affective fit of product placement and narrative enjoyment from product placement positively influence brand evaluations. (Gillespie et al., 2018).

2.5 Creator Product Placement and Creator Marketing

The functions of content creators have drawn the attention of advertising industry in commodifying them to represent brands and their value chain (Arriagada, 2021). Content creators have two strategic advantages over traditional advertising media: authenticity and entrepreneurial spirit (Marwick, 2013; Abidin, 2016). Content creators who integrate advertised materials into their social media contents were worth 6.5 billion in 2019 (Arriagada, 2021). The creators are competing with traditional advertising media as they feel obligated to depreciate the informational gap between consumers and companies (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020).

YouTube, along with other social media platforms, is growingly becoming an appealing platform for product placement opportunities (Gerhards, 2019). Marketeers are collaborating with rising content generators to enhance relevance (Ghosh, 2022). Product placement in social media creates persuasion impact, elicits parasocial communication (Boerman et al., 2017), generates the feeling of identification and belongingness (Jans et al., 2020).

The collaboration between content creators and brands has let the introduction of an entirely new term known as "creator marketing". Creator marketing is a strategy according to which brands partner with online content creators. It is a long-term strategy to improve visibility and involvement (Morneau, 2023). Creator marketing is a strategy for promoting brand, product, or service using online content creators (Pop-Andonov, 2021). The concept is mentioned in Meta's official website as well.

2.6 Research Gap

The existing literatures converse about the determinants of social media influencer marketing, introduce the concept of creator marketing, and discuss the application of creator product placement in a limited manner. However, antecedents of content creator product placement and their influence on consumers' attitude and purchase intention are yet to be clearly understood. As the marketing practitioners and industry experts suggested, creator marketing and influencer marketing should not be used interchangeably (West, 2022; Influencer Hub, 2023), the findings related to influencer marketing cannot be generalized for creator product placement. To mitigate the identified knowledge gap, the current study aims to develop a model to identify the variables

associated with creator-based product placement.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1 Broad Objective

The broad objective of the study is to propose and empirically test content creator-based product placement model to determine the predecessor variables and resulting behavioral responses of the target audience.

3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the determinants of consumers' attitude toward product placement by content creators.
2. To determine the effect of consumers' attitude toward product placement on attitude toward brand.
3. To analyze the influence of attitude toward brand on consumers' purchase intention.
4. To investigate the mediated effects of the antecedents on purchase intention.

4. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

The variables determined and hypotheses to be tested are discussed below:

4.1 Content Preference (CP)

For the current study, content preference is defined as the type of contents liked or preferred by the target population. Likeability is the positive first impression of a person which leads to positive evaluation (Robbins & DeNisi, 1994). Likeability positively affects social media engagement and acceptance of product placement (Lai & Liu, 2020). Consumers' perception of product placement is heavily influenced by the type of program (Williams et al., 2011). Genre of the films or programs affects the effectiveness of product placement (Waldt, 2005). The type/genre of programs/films as a variable can be translated into type of contents in the context of social media. Therefore, it is necessary to look into the impact of preferred type of program or content on attitude toward product placement. The current study hypothesizes the following:

H1: Content preference has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.2 Content Relatability (CR)

"Relatability is a situation where an ordinary person might see themselves reflected" (Mead, 2014). According to Self-determination theory, relatedness (i.e., relatability) is one of the fundamental psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It can also be understood in the context of self-congruence theory. Self-congruence or self-congruity is a psychological process in which a consumer identifies himself with a brand or product (Sirgy et al., 2016). Experts believe that consumers buy the product or brand that aligns with his or her self-concept (Kumar & Nayak, 2014). Incongruence between self-concept and brand can lead to brand hate (Islam et al., 2019). Relatability is a significant factor contributing to the successful influencer marketing (Forbes, 2024). Relatability facilitates the correlation between content and audience engagement (Atiq et al., 2022). The discussion reasonably leads to propose content relatability to have a positive impact on attitude toward content creator-based product placement.

H2: Content relatability has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.3 Content Relevance (CV)

The extent to which consumers recognize an object to be self-related or critical to obtain desired personal objectives and values is called relevance (Celsi & Olsen, 1988). Relevance of advertising material influences the efficacy of the advertising as it increases consumer attention and decreases avoidance (Jung, 2017). Perceived relevance has positive effect on product placement and buying intention of consumers (Adis, et al., 2015). In the context of the current study, the content relevance is defined as to whether a social media content feels appropriate, relevant, and matches the need of the audience. The study hypothesizes a positive influence of content relevance on attitude.

H3: Content relevance has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.4 Content Quality (CQ)

Perceived quality is the consumer's evaluation of an entity's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1987). Content Quality is a significant aspect studied in the context of social media because of the recent growth of user-generated contents (Agichtein et al., 2008; Chai et al., 2009). Content quality is a critical variable that influences purchasing intention of the consumers (Onofrei et al., 2022). The impact of user-generated content on attitude toward product placement is yet to be explored. Thus, the study investigates the following hypothesis:

H4: Content quality has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.5 Content Entertainment (CE)

Ducoffe (1996) defined entertainment as “the ability to fulfill audience’s needs for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional enjoyment.” One of the primary reasons behind social media usage by the mass audience is its entertainment value (Naqvi et al., 2020). Product placement regarded as “branded entertainment” because of its integration into entertainment industry (Hudson & Hudson, 2010). Perception of entertainment positively influences consumers’ attitudes toward advertising (Bauer et al., 2005). Entertainment value increases the chance of consumers to positively evaluate an advertisement. (Ducoffe, 1995). The following hypothesis summarizes our proposed relationship between social media content entertainment and attitude toward creator-based product placement.

H5: Content entertainment has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.6 Attitude toward Creator (AC)

Attitude toward advertising spokesperson has substantial positive influence on the attitude toward advertising (Lin, 2011). In movie product placement context, attitude toward the actor is similar to the attitude toward spokesperson and influences the attitude toward the product placement (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). Attitude toward spokesperson, endorser, or actor can be interpreted as the attitude toward creator in creator context. It leads to the sixth hypothesis of the study:

H6: Attitude toward creator has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.7 Creator Prominence (CPM)

The current study defines creator prominence as the popularity, fame, or reputation of the content maker. Prominent creators can be regarded as social media celebrities for which reason celebrity endorsement literatures can be applied to define the variable. Celebrity endorsement yields positive attitude toward advertising and buying intention (Akin & Block, 1983; Petty et al., 1983; Erdogan, 1999). As creator with popularity has a celebrity status, the celebrity endorsement literature can be applied in our context.

H7: Creator prominence has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.8 Parasocial Relationship (PSR)

Parasocial relationship (PSR), originally conceived as Parasocial Interaction (PI), was coined by Horton & Wohl as the illusion of direct, personal interaction between audience and ‘personae’. (1956). Appearance of celebrities in mass media allows the spectators to create a sense of intimacy and bonding with them (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) came up with a scale to measure parasocial interaction which was heavily used by other researchers. Hartmann & Goldhoorn (2011) argued that Parasocial Interaction is an imagined by the users in specific exposure situations. According to them, addressing the audiences with bodily and verbal expressions by a media performer intensifies the feeling of parasocial interaction. Researchers later introduced the concept of Parasocial Relationship which is different from the Parasocial Interaction as the former is more long-term, enduring bond the viewers develop with the performer (Cummins & Cui, 2014). The use of social networking sites is positively correlated with the feeling of parasocial relationship (Kim et al., 2015). PSR increases desires of the followers to own the products used by celebrities which influences word of mouth and purchase intention (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). In social media influencer marketing, PSR has a strong positive impact on purchase intention (Masuda et al., 2022). In the creator marketing context, we propose the following hypothesis:

H8: Parasocial relationship with creator has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.9 Fit between Content and Brand (CNB)

The concept of fit or congruence has been heavily applied in the field of sponsorship (Nagar, 2016). Congruence between the event and sponsored brand provides a feeling of cognitive satisfaction which positively impacts audience’s brand evaluation (Meyers-Levie & Tybout, 1989). Fit between the message source and the brand plays a crucial role determining consumers’ attitude (Balasubramanian et al., 2014; Gillespie et al., 2018). According to movie product placement literature, fit between movie and brand leads to positive attitude toward brand and purchase intention (Nagar, 2016). These conclusions lead us to hypothesize that the fit between content and brand could influence the attitude toward content creator-based product placement.

H9: Fit between content and brand has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.10 Fit between Creator and Brand (CRB)

Poor fit between brand and influencer can results in consumers’ dissatisfaction of the endorsement and brand

weakening which can lower consumers' purchasing intention (Qian & Park, 2021). Fit between actor and brand positively affects attitude toward the product placement (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). Fit between creator and brand is identical to the fit between influencer and brand and fit between actor and brand. This reasonably leads to the tenth hypothesis:

H10: Fit between creator and brand has positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement.

4.11 Attitude toward Creator Product Placement (APP)

Numerous studies have demonstrated that attitude toward advertising favorably affects attitude toward brand which subsequently affects purchasing intention (Wahid & Ahmed, 2011; Spears & Singh, 2004). In line with the advertising literature, attitude toward product placement is also found to exert positive influence on attitude toward the brand (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). Hence, the following hypothesis is formed:

H11: Attitude toward creator product placement has positive impact on attitude toward brand.

4.12 Attitude toward Brand (AB)

Attitude toward the brand is a person's internal evaluation of a brand (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). It is an evaluative outcome capturing an individual's attitude toward a brand (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). An overwhelming number of studies have recurrently established the positive relationship between attitude toward brand and purchase intention (Spears & Singh, 2004). Therefore, the final hypothesis of the study is:

H12: Attitude toward brand has positive impact on purchase intention.

The variables and their hypothesized relationships are shown in the figure below.

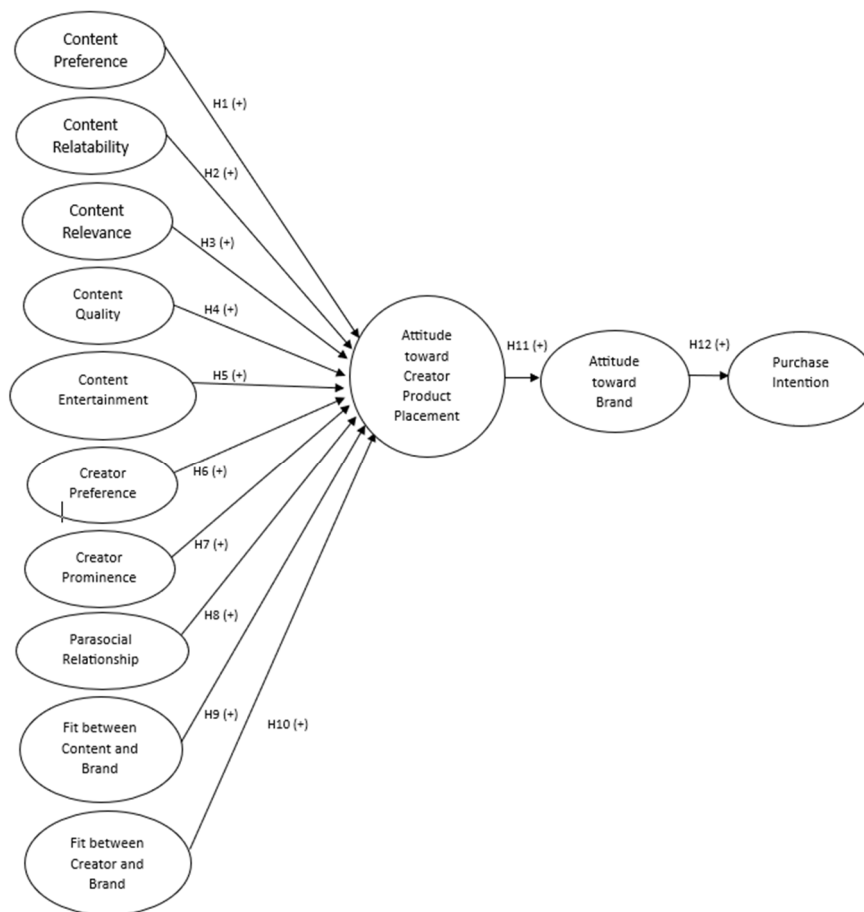


Figure 1. The Conceptual Model

Source: Researchers.

5. Methodology of the Study

5.1 Nature of the Study

The study is descriptive in nature as it aims to describe and empirically examine the variables associated with the proposed model. It can be classified further as a single-cross sectional study as the data are collected from the target group of respondents only once.

5.2 Target Population

The target population for the study includes people aged between 18 to 44 years living in Dhaka, Bangladesh who use Facebook and watch promoted video contents. The total number of Facebook years in Bangladesh was 67,179,200 in June, 2024 (NapoleonCat, 2024). The same source reveals, the total number of Facebook years aged between 18 to 44 is approximately 6,25,00,000. However, the size of the target population cannot be precisely determined from any available source.

5.3 Sampling Design

The study applied the combination of judgmental and convenience sampling techniques which are non-probability sampling techniques (Malhotra, 2010). Random sampling could not be applied as a sampling frame consisting of representative list of target population is unavailable or at least inaccessible. Target respondents were selected after confirming that their age is within the range of the defined target population, use Facebook and have experience of watching video contents containing product placement. The sample size is estimated using Cochran's equation (Cochran, 1963). After specifying 95% confidence interval, population proportion of 0.50 and margin of error of 0.05, the sample size has been calculated to be 385. For structural equation modeling, the sample size should be within 200 to 400 when Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) is used (Malhotra, 2010). Kline (2023) recommended the sample size to be at least 10 times of the number of parameters analyzed for SEM. Hence, the sample size of 385 can be considered sufficient to perform the required analysis.

5.4 Identification of Variables

The proposed creator product placement model consists of thirteen variables and twelve parameters. The antecedents of the model can be broadly identified by two categories: content characteristics and creator characteristics. Content characteristics include: content preference, content relatability, content relevance, content quality, content entertainment and fit between content and brand; while the creator characteristics include: creator preference, creator prominence, parasocial relationship, and fit between creator and brand. All of these factors are supposed to determine attitude toward product placement which in turn influences attitude toward the brand. Consumers' attitude toward the brand affects purchase intention. All of the proposed relationships are direct and positive.

5.5 Measurement and Scaling

The study used 7-point Likert scale to measure the responses toward each item where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. 7-point scale improves accuracy of response and provides respondents with more freedom to choose from given options (Likert, 1932).

5.6 Data Collection Technique

The study applied survey technique based on structured paper-based questionnaire to collect the data. The topic-specific part of the questionnaire contained 40 questions in total. There are 13 latent constructs, 12 of which were measured through 3 items for each, while parasocial relationship is the only construct that included 4 items.

5.7 Data Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling technique was used to test the hypothesized relationships and validate the proposed model. JAMOVI (version 4.0), a free, powerful, and interactive statistical software was used to perform the required analysis, estimate the measurement model and structural model. Maximum Likelihood Estimation technique was chosen for the study. In addition to the hypothesized relationships, the indirect mediated relationships were also calculated using the SEM technique.

6. Analysis & Results

6.1 Measurement Model Fit

The table below shows indices of the measurement model fit which are mostly reported and relied upon.

Table 1. Measurement model fit indices

Fit Indices	Values
Goodness of Fit Indices	
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.986
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.971
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.985
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.984
Badness of Fit Indices	
χ^2 (df = 662)	1367 (p < 0.001)
SRMR	0.0362
RMSEA	0.0511

All the goodness of fit indices are well above the required range of 0.90 (GFI = 0.986, AGFI = 0.971, CFI = 0.985, TLI = 0.984) indicating satisfactory model fit (Kyndt & Onghena, 2014). Though chi-square value is found to be statistically significant, though both SRMR and RMSEA are less than the prescribed threshold of 0.08 (SRMR = 0.0362, RMSEA = 0.0511) showing good model fit (Malhotra, 2010).

6.2 The Measurement Model Reliability and Validity

The following table exhibits the measurement model summary:

Table 2. Measurement model summary

Latent Constructs and Measured Scale Items	Standardized Loadings
Content Preference (CP) [$\alpha = 0.885$, CR = 0.888, AVE = 0.769]	
CP1: I watch Facebook contents that interest me.	0.963
CP2: I watch the type of Facebook contents that I prefer	0.840
CP3: I watch the type of Facebook contents that I love	0.821
Content Relatability (CR) [$\alpha = 0.861$, CR = 0.860, AVE = 0.707]	
CR1: I watch Facebook contents that I can relate to my life.	0.885
CR2: I watch Facebook contents that I can relate to my experience.	0.876
CR3: I watch Facebook contents that I can relate to people I know.	0.755
Content Relevance (CV) [$\alpha = 0.805$, CR = 0.807, AVE = 0.624]	
CV1: I watch Facebook contents that are relevant to me.	0.788
CV2: I watch Facebook contents that are applicable for me.	0.776
CV3: I watch Facebook contents that are consistent with my need.	0.805
Content Quality (CQ) [$\alpha = 0.881$, CR = 0.874, AVE = 0.739]	
CQ1: I watch Facebook contents that are of good quality.	0.889
CQ2: I watch Facebook contents that are well-made.	0.841
CQ3: I watch Facebook contents that are well thought-out.	0.848
Content Entertainment (CE) [Items are adopted from Ducoffe (1996)] [$\alpha = 0.867$, CR = 0.869, AVE = 0.743]	
CE1: I watch Facebook contents that are entertaining.	0.863
CE2: I watch Facebook contents that are enjoyable.	0.866
CE3: I watch Facebook contents that give pleasant experience.	0.856

Attitude toward Creator (AC) [$\alpha = 0.890$, CR = 0.895, AVE = 0.785]	
AC1: I watch Facebook contents of the creators I like.	0.917
AC2: I watch Facebook contents of the creators I perceive favorably.	0.887
AC3: I watch Facebook contents of the creators I prefer.	0.851
Creator Prominence (CP) [$\alpha = 0.893$, CR = 0.887, AVE = 0.756]	
CPM1: I watch Facebook contents of the creators who are popular.	0.920
CPM2: I watch Facebook contents of the creators who are prominent.	0.852
CPM3: I watch Facebook contents of the creators who have reputation.	0.834
Parasocial Relationship (PSR) [Adapted from Masuda et al. (2022)] [$\alpha = 0.888$, CR = 0.890, AVE = 0.707]	
PSR1: I watch Facebook contents of the creators I feel comfortable with.	0.851
PSR2: I watch Facebook contents of the creators whom I consider friendly.	0.881
PSR3: I watch Facebook contents of the creators I follow.	0.836
PSR4: I watch Facebook contents of the creators who understands my need.	0.802
Fit between Content and Brand (CNB) [Adapted from Balasubramanian et al. (2014)] [$\alpha = 0.898$, CR = 0.886, AVE = 0.759]	
CNB1: Product placement fits the content story.	0.865
CNB2: Product placement makes the content story meaningful.	0.871
CNB3: Product placement is consistent with the content.	0.878
Fit between Creator and Brand (CRB) [Adapted from Balasubramanian et al. (2014)] [$\alpha = 0.892$, CR = 0.890, AVE = 0.769]	
CRB1: Product placement matches with the creator.	0.895
CRB2: Pairing of content creators with brand feels natural.	0.855
CRB3: Pairing of content creators with brands is perfect.	0.881
Attitude toward Creator Product Placement (APP) [$\alpha = 0.812$, CR = 0.802, AVE = 0.627]	
APP1: I like product placement in Facebook video contents.	0.903
APP2: Product placement in Facebook video contents is enjoyable.	0.851
APP3: Product placement in Facebook contents interests me.	0.585
Attitude toward Brand (AB) [$\alpha = 0.895$, CR = 0.890, AVE = 0.771]	
AB1: I like the brands placed in the Facebook contents.	0.898
AB2: I have positive attitude toward the brands placed in Facebook contents	0.860
AB3: I grow interest toward the brands placed in the Facebook video contents.	0.876
Purchase Intention (PI) [Adapted from Spears and Singh (2004)] [$\alpha = 0.912$, CR = 0.926, AVE = 0.824]	
P11: I have intention to purchase the product placed within the Facebook content.	0.982
P12: I have interest in purchasing the product placed within the Facebook content.	0.866
P13: I am likely to buy the product placed within the Facebook content.	0.798

All the standardized factor loadings are statistically significant. All of the loadings are above 0.70 except APP3 which is 0.585. As the loading is statistically significant and higher than 0.50, it meets the standard and the item is not dropped (Malhotra, 2010). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are used as reliability measures. All the Cronbach's alpha scores are higher than 0.80 and are considered 'good' (Malhotra, 2010). Similarly, composite reliability scores are well above 0.80. Hence, the scales are considered reliable. Average Variance Extracted (AVE), a widely used convergent validity measure is reported. All the AVE scores are above 0.50 indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

The following table exhibits the HTMT ratio of correlations.

Table 3. Heterotrait- Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations

	CP	CR	CV	CQ	CE	AC	CP	PSR	CNB	CRB	APP	AB	PI
CP	1												
CR	0.1782	1											
CV	0.2886	0.456	1										
CQ	0.3616	0.242	0.394	1									
CE	0.1502	0.388	0.392	0.336	1								
AC	0.2407	0.356	0.495	0.305	0.3677	1							
CP	0.0327	0.28	0.18	0.149	0.2979	0.452	1						
PSR	0.0795	0.296	0.348	0.176	0.3387	0.456	0.3988	1					
CNB	0.3457	0.349	0.298	0.423	0.2477	0.147	0.1622	0.3598	1				
CRB	0.2968	0.335	0.23	0.302	0.2574	0.164	0.2323	0.33	0.864	1			
APP	0.6541	0.233	0.297	0.504	0.0633	0.185	0.0677	0.0611	0.593	0.505	1		
AB	0.3974	0.345	0.277	0.394	0.2911	0.258	0.2323	0.257	0.619	0.542	0.8382	1	
PI	0.2152	0.259	0.2	0.245	0.1465	0.136	0.1856	0.2444	0.491	0.421	0.5072	0.706	1

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations is a widely accepted measure of discriminant validity for which value less than 0.90 is considered desirable (Hair & Alameer, 2022). The above table demonstrates, all the HTMT correlations are less than 0.90. The correlations between attitude toward attitude toward product placement and attitude toward brand is the highest with 0.839. Therefore, we can conclude that each construct is distinct from other constructs of the model.

6.3 Structural Model Validity

The following table showcases the fit indices of the structural model.

Table 4. Structural Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Values
Goodness of Fit Indices	
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.958
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.943
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.937
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.926
Badness of Fit Indices	
$\chi^2(df = 662)$	1367 ($p < 0.001$)
SRMR	0.042
RMSEA	0.052

The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are all above 0.90 (GFI = 0.958, AGFI = 0.943, CFI = 0.937, TLI = 0.926) demonstrating good model fit (Kyndt & Onghena, 2014). SRMR and RMSEA are widely considered badness of fit indices for which values below 0.08 are desirable (Malhotra, 2010; Kyndt & Onghena, 2014). The calculated SRMR and RMSEA are far below the cutoff values (SRMR = 0.042, RMSEA = 0.052) signifying that the model fit the data very well. However, chi-square value is found to be statistically significant meaning an issue with the measurement model fit. Chi-square value is responsive to sample size (Malhotra, 2010). As all the other fit indices are within the acceptable range, we can conclude that the model fits the dataset.

6.4 Parameter Estimates

The following table exhibits the parameter estimates.

Table 5. Parameter estimates

Label	Dependent Variable	Predecessor Variable	B	SE	Z	P	Decision
H1	Attitude toward CPP	Content Preference	0.3348	0.0383	13.89	<.001***	Accepted
H2	Attitude toward CPP	Content Relatability	0.0673	0.0505	2.118	0.034*	Accepted
H3	Attitude toward CPP	Content Relevance	-0.0197	0.0585	-0.537	0.591	Rejected
H4	Attitude toward CPP	Content Quality	0.141	0.0471	4.765	<.001***	Accepted
H5	Attitude toward CPP	Content Entertainment	-0.0419	0.0461	-1.445	0.148	Rejected
H6	Attitude toward CPP	Attitude toward Creator	0.1115	0.0501	3.541	<.001***	Accepted
H7	Attitude toward CPP	Creator Prominence	-0.047	0.0601	-1.245	0.213	Rejected
H8	Attitude toward CPP	Parasocial Relationship	0.0968	0.0432	3.568	<.001***	Accepted
H9	Attitude toward CPP	Content brand fit	0.30	0.0759	6.288	<.001***	Accepted
H10	Attitude toward CPP	Creator brand fit	0.1639	0.0696	3.743	<.001***	Accepted
H11	Attitude toward brand	Attitude toward CPP	0.8651	0.0677	16.014	<.001***	Accepted
H12	Purchase Intention	Attitude toward brand	0.7085	0.0278	18.119	<.001***	Accepted

Note. ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05.

The table summarizes the hypotheses, dependent and independent variables, unstandardized estimates, standard errors of measurement, standardized estimates (Beta), z values, p values and decisions made based on the p values. As the level of significance 0.05 is chosen for the study, the p value less than 0.05 will lead to the acceptance of the hypothesis. The first hypothesis, H1 is supported as the p value is statistically significant with standardized coefficient of 0.3348. The size of the coefficient suggests that content preference happens to be the largest predictor of attitude toward creator product placement. The dependence relationship between content relatability and attitude toward product placement is also statistically significant with coefficient of 0.0673. Therefore, H2 is also supported. H3, stating that content relevance positively influences the attitude toward product placement has been rejected as the p value is not statistically significant. Regarding the next one, content quality is found to be responsible for 14.1% of the variation in attitude toward product placement which is significant. Hence, H4 is accepted. The lack of statistical significance leads us to reject H5 signifying that entertainment doesn't have a positive impact on attitude toward product placement.

H6 is supported demonstrating attitude toward creator is positive determinant of the model. The next hypothesis, H7, is rejected meaning establishing the fact that creator prominence is not an indicator of attitude toward creator product placement. Unsurprisingly, H8 is accepted indicating that parasocial relationship has a positive influence on attitude toward product placement. H9 and H10 are both accepted indicating that content brand fit and creator-brand fit are predictor variables of attitude toward product placement with coefficients of 0.30 and 0.1639 respectively. Interestingly, the coefficient suggests the fit between content and brand is the second largest predictor of the model.

Attitude toward brand is found to be dependent on attitude toward creator product placement, as the H11 is accepted with standardized estimate of 0.8651. Finally, H12, stating that attitude toward brand has positive

influence on purchase intention, is also supported with coefficient of 0.7085.

6.5 Analysis of Mediating Effects (Indirect Effects)

The following table displays the indirect effects among the variables. The model basically shows mediated effects of antecedents on purchase intention through the paths of attitude toward product placement and attitude toward brand.

Table 6. Estimation of indirect paths

Label	Description	SE	β	Z	p
IE1	Content Preference \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.019	0.205	15.175	<.001***
IE2	Content Relatability \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.027	0.041	2.127	0.033*
IE3	Content Relevance \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.032	-0.012	-0.538	0.591
IE4	Content Quality \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.026	0.086	4.787	<.001***
IE5	Entertainment \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.025	-0.026	-1.453	0.146
IE6	Attitude toward Creator \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.027	0.068	3.605	<.001***
IE7	Creator Prominence \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.033	-0.029	-1.251	0.211
IE8	Parasocial \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.024	0.059	3.576	<.001***
IE9	Content brand fit \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.04	0.184	6.444	<.001***
IE10	Creator brand fit \Rightarrow Attitude toward PP \Rightarrow Attitude toward brand \Rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.038	0.1	3.697	<.001***

Note. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Content preference has a statistically significant mediated effect on purchase intention as the indirect path coefficient is 0.20. Content Relatability's impact on purchase intention through attitude toward product placement and attitude toward brand is significant at level of significance of 0.05 as the standardized coefficient is 0.041. Content relevance has insignificant indirect effect on purchase intention. Content Quality has statistically significant indirect effect on buying intention with beta of 0.08. Mediated effect of content entertainment is not statistically significant. Attitude toward creator has mediated significant impact on purchase intention. Statistical significance has not been found for indirect paths between creator prominence on purchase intention. Rest of the indirect effects of parasocial relationship, content brand fit, and creator brand fit on purchase intention are statistically significant.

The following path diagram shows the resulting structural model consisting of hypothesized direct relationships from JAMOV output.

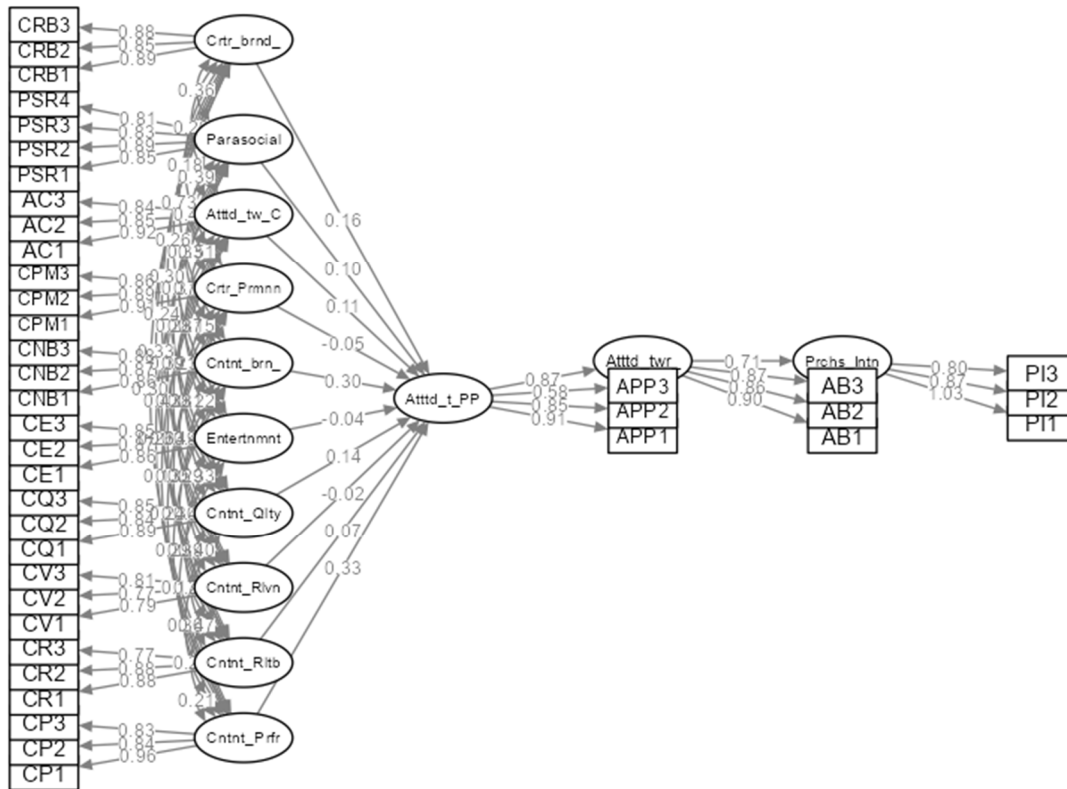


Figure 2. The Structural Equation Model (JAMOVI Output)

7. Discussion

7.1 Implications and Theoretical Contribution of the Study

The study addresses the issue of the unavailability of a creator product placement model to understand the underlying factors influencing efficacy of product placement. We firmly believe, the paper will aid digital and social media marketers to select appropriate contents consistent with the brand and recruit the right creators to become endorsers to yield desired level of attitude toward the promotion, brand and subsequent purchase intention.

Preference toward specific contents is found to be a significant determinant of the attitude toward creator product placement, attitude toward brand and subsequent purchase intention. If the target audience love to watch a particular category of contents, it is highly likely that the placement in those contents would yield positive outcomes. Contents that viewers can easily relate to themselves, their past incidents or people they know are effective to elicit positive assessment of the brand promotion and buying behavior. The marketers while choosing contents should emphasize on how well the audience relate themselves with them. Quality, like almost anything in this world, has proven its significance in this regard. Consumers' subjective evaluation of a content's overall quality and aesthetics strongly dictates the evaluation of the placement. Attitude and preference toward creators substantially influence how audiences view the product placement. Promotions by preferred and loved creators are evaluated positively by the audience. Parasocial relationship, the feeling of closeness and bonding with the creator significantly affects attitude and subsequent purchase intention. Hence, while hiring the creator for promotion, businesses need to consider the intimacy or bonding between the creator and the target audience. Congruence between content and brand has been demonstrated as a causal factor in the model. People's perception of how well the content matches with the promoted brand dictates how they view the placement. Empirical evidence suggests, attitude toward product placement positively influences attitude toward the placed brand. Subsequently, attitude toward the brand strongly determine consumers' buying intention.

7.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

Though the creator product placement of this study is relatively new, the findings can be compared with advertising, product placement, and influencer marketing literatures. The study has found that content relatability

has significant positive impact on attitude toward creator product placement and subsequent attitude toward brand. It matches the findings of the Liu, et al (2012) where the self-congruence positively impacts attitude toward brand. The authors argued that if the consumers believe a brand matches his/her self-image, he/she is likely to buy the brand. It can also be drawn parallel with the findings of Yoon and Kim (2016) according to which self-congruity affects responses toward advertisement. The researchers conducted the study to understand the impacts of self-congruity and trustworthiness of the source on behavior toward coffee shop advertisement. However, the current study has not found the relationship between content relevance and product placement statistically significant, which differs from the findings of Adis et. Al (2015). The mentioned study has proposed a positive relationship between relevance and attitude toward product placement in social media. The study was conducted on 210 Malaysian respondents who belong to Generation Y. The difference of the findings can be attributed to the difference between the target population of the two countries and sample size.

Consumers' perceived Entertainment, though an established causal factor of the advertising value model (Ducoffe, 1996; Bauer et al., 2005), has not been found to be significant variable in the current creator product placement model. In advertising value model, we measure the entertainment aspect of the advertisement itself, while in product placement context we measure the entertainment aspect of the content. It can be possible source of difference. However, our conclusion regarding entertainment is somewhat similar to that of Lou & Yuan (2019) who showed entertainment doesn't have significantly positive impact on brand awareness and resulting purchase intention.

Parasocial Relationship has established itself as a strong predictor in the model which is unsurprisingly consistent with the influencer marketing literatures (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Masuda et al., 2022). It proves despite the differences between influencer marketing and creator marketing, the parasocial relationship will continue to be a crucial factor determining both. Impact of attitude toward creator on attitude toward product placement resembles with the impact of attitude toward advertising spokesperson (Lin, 2011). It proves the fact the attitude toward creator and attitude toward spokesperson are theoretically similar constructs having similar implications for marketing communication. However, the influence of creator prominence on attitude toward product placement is not established. It unexpectedly disagrees with the celebrity endorsement literatures cited before (Akin & Block, 1983; Petty et al., 1983; Erdogan, 1999). A probable reason behind the disagreement could be the difference between creator product placement and traditional celebrity endorsement marketing. Prominent creators may not be viewed as traditional celebrities, which can also be another probable reason behind the disagreement. However, this needs to be further researched to be established as theory.

Fit between content and brand and fit between creator and brand which are conceptually similar to the fit between movie and brand and fit between actor and brand respectively have positive influence on attitude toward product placement in line with the movie product placement literature (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). It indicates that we can draw parallels between different forms of product placement. These findings are also consistent with the endorser-product congruence (Lee & Koo, 2015) and event-brand congruence (Meyers-Levie & Tybout, 1989). It demonstrates, congruence or fit theory is relevant for a wide range of marketing and promotion activities.

Positive influence of attitude toward product placement on attitude toward brand and its subsequent impact on purchase intention are identical to the conclusions of the reviewed advertising literatures (Wahid & Ahmed, 2011; Spears & Singh, 2004). Differences mentioned in this section can be attributed to the distinguished methodology, target population, sampling design, differences in the countries and cultures. However, these need to be researched further for deeper understanding.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

The study was primarily focused on Facebook content creators. Hence, the findings will not be equally applicable for contents or creators of other platforms including YouTube, Instagram, Tiktok etc. The study doesn't investigate into product placement by specific creators or on specific contents. It focuses mainly on video contents and not on written, audio or graphical contents. The study didn't use any control variables like age, gender, occupation, product/service. In mediation analysis, the Structural equation model only reported indirect mediated paths. It didn't incorporate direct paths between distant variables. The study didn't perform any moderation analysis to understand the moderating impact of variables.

7.4 Future Research Directions

Separate studies need to be conducted to validate the model for other social media platforms including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok etc. Future studies may incorporate newer variables into the model like trustworthiness, expertise, social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, and attitude homophily as the preceding variables and hypothesize newer relationships. Brand awareness and brand loyalty can be used as the dependent variables. Age,

gender, occupation, product/service can be used as control variables. Future studies can explore product placement on written, graphical, and audio contents. Studies can be conducted to discover responses toward specific contents, creators, and brands. As the current study attempted to explore the indirect mediated relationships among the factors, future studies should estimate direct paths between antecedents and purchase intention. Moderating variables can also be incorporated into the model.

8. Conclusion

The undeniable growth of internet-based technologies and mass dependence on social media platforms call for strategic changes by the marketers. Recognizing and properly utilizing digital content creators who have provided 'netizens' a complete, all-inclusive media experience with binge-worthy contents will be crucial for the success of small and large businesses alike. The creators who have established themselves as alternatives to traditional celebrity endorsers with more customized target audience, improved interactivity, instant feedbacks, and cost effectiveness are worth investing in. The current study will assist marketing practitioners to decide on choosing the perfect contents and hiring the right creators to increase brand awareness and brand loyalty. It will certainly help academicians explore different aspects of the emerging creator marketing concept and allow it to evolve as a complete set of interconnected theories.

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Obtained.

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The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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