Influence of product innovativeness and subjective norms on female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products

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The beauty-product industry represents a significant portion of the international economy, with an estimated value of 532 billion USD in 2017, which is predicted to grow to 863 billion USD by 2024. Beauty products encompass any product used to care for, clean and enhance the beauty of the human body. The Youth, currently classified as Generation Y (individuals born between 1986 and 2005), represent a salient current and future market segment for various industries. For the beauty-product industry, the adult portion of this generation, especially the female Generation Y adults, represent a particularly relevant target market given that this bachelorhood stage of the family life cycle is characterised by self-indulgence, the need for reference group acceptance and the prominent concerns of meeting and dating. As such, this study sought to determine the influence of product innovativeness and subjective norms on female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products. Data was gathered using a questionnaire from a convenience sample of 610 Generation Y female students registered at three South African university campuses. Data analysis included exploratory principle component analysis, collinearity diagnostics, confirmatory factor analysis, measures of reliability and construct validity and path analysis. The findings suggest that female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products is a three-factor model comprising attitudes, subjective norms and innovativeness. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis also indicate that this model exhibits reliability, construct validity and good model fit. The path analysis results indicate that beauty product innovativeness and subjective norms are statistically significant predictors of female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty

products. These findings suggest that beauty-product manufacturers need to constantly innovate their products and that beauty-product advertisement should incorporate typical members of the female Generation Y reference group so as to promote subjective norms.

Key words: *attitudes, beauty products, female generation y students, innovativeness, subjective norms*
JEL Classification: *M31.*

Introduction

Beauty products comprise any product used externally to condition, care for and beautify the human body (Ergin, *et al.*, 2005; Khraim, 2011). Globally, the beauty-product industry represents a substantial portion of the economy, with an estimated value of 532 billion USD in 2017, which is predicted to reach 863 billion USD by 2024 (Zion Market Research, 2018). The South African beauty-product industry has also proven to be a highly lucrative industry, with an estimated worth of R27.35 billion at the retail level in 2017 (Reportlinker, 2017; Mungwari, 2018).

In the discipline of consumer behaviour, attitudes are considered to be strategically salient given that they typically are predictive of consumption-related intentions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014). As such, an attitude influences the purchase decisions made by a consumer (Basha *et al.*, 2015). Individuals who hold a more favourable attitude towards a behaviour will have a stronger intention to perform the considered behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011). Based on the importance of attitude in consumer purchase decisions, as well as the beauty-product industry being a noteworthy industry, both globally and nationally, an understanding of the factors that may influence consumers' attitudes towards beauty products will assist marketers in targeting beauty-product consumers more effectively.

The Youth, currently classified as Generation Y (individuals born between 1986 and 2005) (Eastman & Lui, 2012; Markert, 2004), make up a significant percentage of the world's population (Tilford, 2018) and represent a salient current and future market segment for various industries. This is also true in South Africa, where members classified as Generation Y accounted for 36 percent of the country's population in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2018). For the beauty-product industry, the adult portion of this generation, especially female Generation Y adults, represent a particularly relevant target market (Deslandes, 2017) given that this bachelorhood stage of the family life cycle is characterised by self-indulgence, the need for reference group acceptance and the prominent concerns of meeting and dating

(Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014). Despite the importance of the adult female Generation Y segment to the beauty-product industry, there is a dearth of published empirical research on the factors that influence their attitudes towards beauty products, particularly in the South African market. In an effort to address this gap in the literature, this study considered two potentially salient antecedents of adult Generation Y females' attitudes towards beauty products, namely subjective norms and beauty product innovativeness. The study focused specifically on female Generation Y university students as the target population because a tertiary qualification more often than not translates into a higher future earning potential, which equates to greater disposable spending power, as well as a higher social standing within a community (Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016) – two factors that often render graduates as trendsetters and opinion leaders amongst their peers, which, in this case, is the wider female Generation Y (Bevan-Dye, 2013).

Review of the Literature
Subjective norms

Subjective norms can be described as the social pressure individuals perceive and the extent to which they are aware of, or influenced by the opinion of significant others regarding if they would want to perform a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Al-Debei *et al.*, 2013; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Jin & Kang, 2010; Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011). Individuals feel this pressure as a result of significant others' perceptions of the standards and conventions of the behaviour in consideration (Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006). Significant others are defined as those individuals whose preferences concerning a specific behaviour are important to an individual (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Individuals generally behave in a way that is accepted and encouraged by the people they believe to be important (Al-Debei *et al.*, 2013). Although various previous studies report that subjective norms have a significant influence on purchase intention (Al-Debei *et al.*, 2013; Chen, 2007; Kim, 2009; Summers *et al.*, 2006; Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011), studies done by Schepers and Wetzels (2007) and Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) found subjective norms to have a significant influence on attitudes.

The Youth are particularly susceptible to the social pressure to comply with peer-dictated social norms and, for members of Generation Y who live in a world of avid self-presentation on online social networking sites (Deslandes, 2017; Mehdizadeh, 2010), this need to conform to the social norms of peers, including the need to conform to the use of beauty-enhancing products, is compounded (Deslandes, 2017; Nair & Hui 2018).

Innovativeness

Consumer innovativeness is defined as consumers' tendency to freely try new things and embrace change. Innovative consumers engage in the early adoption of an innovation, and purchase new products quicker and more frequently when compared to other consumers (Eun Park *et al.*, 2010; Haseeb et al., 2019). Such consumers are prone to have high levels of involvement with and substantial knowledge of the product category considered, as well as heavy product use. Innovative consumers are also inclined to seek information about, and be opinion leaders regarding the product category (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1995). Fashion innovativeness is a forecaster of purchase behaviour relating to fashion products, particularly regarding young female consumers (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). As such, beauty-product purchases will also be influenced by innovativeness, as beauty products form part of fashion (Macchion *et al.*, 2015). Previous research provides evidence that fashion innovativeness has a direct positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards purchasing fashion products online (Park *et al.*, 2007).

An important factor that influences Generation Y females' beauty-product innovativeness is their access to and use of the proliferation of online beauty-product reviews, blogs and video tutorials, all of which serve to inspire them to experiment with different beauty products and brands (Deslandes, 2017).

Attitudes

An attitude is defined as evaluations, feelings or tendencies, favourable or unfavourable, an individual has towards a behaviour, product or service (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2013). Consumers' value system, including their personal standards and norms influences their attitude (McDaniel *et al.*, 2013). According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014), an attitude is a learned disposition, formed by previous experiences, word-of-mouth communication or marketing messages and can change over time and is consequently described as an individual's evaluation summary of a specific behaviour, product or service. An attitude determines the reaction an individual may have towards objects, people and events, and is therefore deemed to be an important aspect in everyday life (Joubert, 2013; Njagi, Mwania & Manyasi 2018). A more favourable attitude regarding a behaviour will result in individuals having a stronger intention to perform the considered behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011). Since it is evident that consumers' attitude is a determining factor in their purchase intention, as well as their purchase behaviour, the measurement of consumer attitudes attracts the attention of marketers (Blythe, 2013).

Research Methodology

In accordance with the objectives of the study, a descriptive research design guided the methodological aspects of the study. For data collection, the single cross-sectional sampling approach was used.

Sampling method and data collection

The study's target population was defined as female Generation Y university students between the ages of 18 and 24 years enrolled at South African public HEIs. The sampling frame was restricted to those HEI campuses located in South Africa's Gauteng province and judgement sampling was used to choose three HEI campuses - one from a traditional university, one from a university of technology and one from a comprehensive university. Fieldworkers were used to distribute 780 questionnaires across these three campuses (260 per campus) to a convenience sample of university students using the mall-intercept survey method.

Research instrument

A self-reporting survey questionnaire, that included a cover letter, a section requesting demographic data and a section containing scales measuring attitudes towards beauty products, subjective norms pertaining to beauty products and beauty product innovativeness, was used to gather the required data. The scale for measuring the participants' attitudes were measured by Song *et al.*'s (2014) scale (four items). While the effect of subjective norms and beauty product innovativeness were measured by scales from studies done by Kim and Karpova (2010) and Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991), respectively. The measuring instrument comprises 12 items divided into the three dimensions. The first dimension, attitude comprises four items, namely I think using beauty products is a good thing to do', 'using beauty products is valuable to me', 'using beauty products is beneficial to me' and 'I think using beauty products is a necessary thing to do'. The second dimension of subjective norms, consists of four items, namely 'people who influence my behaviour would approve of me buying beauty products', 'people who are important in my life would approve of me buying beauty products', 'people who influence my behaviour would encourage me to buy beauty products' and 'people who are important in my life would encourage me to buy beauty products'. The third dimension, beauty product innovativeness comprises the four items of 'in general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to buy a new beauty product when it appears', 'if I heard a new beauty product was available in store, I would be interested

enough to buy it', 'I will buy a new beauty product, even if I haven't tested it yet' and 'I know the names of new beauty products before other people do'.

Ethical considerations

Before distributing the questionnaire, a copy was submitted to the Social and Technological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Information Technology, North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). The committee classified the questionnaire as low risk and, hence, ethical clearance was obtained. All responses are reported in aggregate and participation in the study was on a voluntary basis.

Data analysis

The data collected from the distributed questionnaires was analysed using Version 25 of IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). The data were analysed using several different statistical methods, including frequencies, percentages, principle component analysis using varimax rotation, collinearity diagnostics, confirmatory factor analysis using the maximum likelihood method, internal-consistency and composite reliability analysis, construct validity analysis, path analysis and descriptive statistics.

Frequencies and percentages were computed to obtain a description of the sample participants. Principle component analysis was run to check for any items that cross-loaded, where the factorability of the data set was first measured using Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaise-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. A statistically significant Bartlett's test of sphericity and a KMO above 0.60 is indicative of a data set being suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2009).

A matrix of Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients was constructed in order to establish nomological validity, where statistically significant relationships in the correct direction between pairs of latent factors planned for inclusion in a model are indicative of nomological validity. Following this, collinearity diagnostics were run to determine whether there were any multi-collinearity concerns, where tolerance values less than 0.10 and an average variance inflation factor (VIF) above 10 are warning signs of multi-collinearity (Pallant, 2010).

A measurement model was specified for confirmatory factor analysis purposes using AMOS. During this stage, reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha (*a*) and composite reliability (CR), where values of 0.70 and above infer acceptable reliability (Malhotra, 2010).

Convergent validity was established by determining whether the computed latent factor loading estimates and average variance extracted (AVE) values equalled or exceeded the 0.50 level. Discriminant validity was established by determining whether the square root of the computed AVE (√AVE) values exceeded the correlation estimates between the relevant latent factors (Hair *et al*., 2010). In order to assess model fit, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the normed-fit index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the comparative-fit index (CFI), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were computed, where GFI, NFI, TLI and CFI values above 0.90, together with SRMR and RMSEA values below 0.08 suggest acceptable model fit (Malhotra, 2010). Path analysis was then run using AMOS to determine the influence of subjective norms and product innovativeness on female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products. The level of statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.01$.

Results and Discussion

Following the distribution of 780 questionnaires, 610 completed questionnaires were returned; that is, there was a 78 percent response rate. Table 1 outlines a description of the sample participants in terms of their race, age, type of HEI and province of origin.

Table 1: Sample description

Race	Percent (%)	Age	Percent (%)	Province	Percent (%)	Institution	Percent (%)
Black African	91.0	18	16.6	Gauteng	61.3	Traditional University	35.1
Coloured	3.6	19	18.0	Limpopo	12.6	University of Technology	32.1
Indian/Asian	0.8	20	18.7	North West	6.1	Comprehensive University	32.8
White	4.4	21	18.2	Free State	7.5		
Missing	0.2	22	13.9	Eastern Cape	3.0		
		23	9.7	Mpumalanga	5.7		
		24	4.9	Kwazulu-Natal	2.5		
				Northern Cape	0.3		
				Western Cape	0.5		
				Missing	0.5		

As shown in Table 1, the spread of participants in terms of race reflects that of the South African population, with most of the sample participants being Black African (91%), followed by White (4.4%), Coloured (4.4%) and Indian/Asian (0.8%). Each of the specified age categories is represented in the sample, with the majority of participants falling into the 19- to 21-year old category (55%). Similarly, each of South Africa's nine provinces are represented in the sample, with the majority indicating their province of origin as Gauteng (61%) – the province from which the HEI campuses included in the study were drawn. The distribution of sample participants between the three HEI campuses was relatively even, with slightly more participants indicating that they were enrolled at a traditional university (35%).

As a starting point, an exploratory principle component analysis using varimax rotation was run to check for any items that cross-loaded. The data set was deemed suitable for principle component analysis given that a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi square = 3292.806, 66 dfs, p ≤ 0.01) and KMO value of 0.86 were computed. In Table 2, the rotated factors and communalities for each of the extracted factors are outlined.

Table 2: Rotated factors

Items	Factors			Communalities
	1	**2**	**3**	
Q1	.785			.679
Q2	.835			.768
Q3	.835			.737
Q4	.776			.665
Q5		.783		.651
Q6		.833		.747
Q7		.823		.765
Q8		.792		.726
Q9			.704	.536
Q10			.776	.636
Q11			.732	.540
Q12			.779	.630

Principle component analysis resulted in three factors being extracted, which explain 67.35 percent of the total variance. Each of the items loaded on the correct factor in accordance with the literature and each of the factor loadings are above 0.70, which, with a sample size of 610, means that they are statistically (Stevens, 2002) as well as practically significant (Hair *et al*., 2010). Each of the communality values exceed 0.50, which provides evidence that a sufficient amount of each of the item's variance is accounted for by the factor solution (Pallant, 2010).

This principle component analysis was followed by the construction of a correlation matrix of Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients to determine whether the latent factors planned for inclusion in the model exhibit nomological validity. Thereafter, the collinearity diagnostics were run to check for any multi-collinearity issues. In Table 3, the correlation coefficients between the three latent factors and the collinearity ststistics are presented.

Table 3: Correlation coefficients and collinearity statistics

Latent factors	Correlation coefficients		Collinearity statistics	
	Attitudes	Subjective norms	Tolerance	VIF
Attitudes			0.723	1.383
Subjective norms	0.511*		0.706	1.417
Product innovativeness	0.286*	0.322*	0.876	1.142
* Significant at p ≤ 0.01				

The correlation coefficients in Table 3 indicate that there is a statistically significant (p ≤ 0.01) positive relationships between each of the pairs of latent factors planned for inclusion in the model; that is, there is evidence of the nomological validity of the planned model. Furthermore, with tolerance values ranging from 0.706 to 0.876 and an average VIF of 1.314, there is also no evidence of any serious multi-collinearity issues.

Following on this, a confirmatory factor analysis was run whereby a three-factor measurement model was specified that included attitudes towards beauty products (four indicators), subjective norms pertaining to beauty products (four indicators) and beauty product innovativeness (four indicators).

As per statistical convention, the first loading on each of the three latent factors was fixed at 1.0 (Byrne, 2010). This resulted in 78 distinct sample moments and 27 distinct parameters to be estimated, which equates to (78-27) 51 degrees of freedom (df) based on an over-identified model and a chi-square value of 154.303, with a probability level equal to 0.000.
The reliability and construct validity of the model were assessed by computing. In Table 4, the estimates for the measurement model are reported, including the standardised factor loading estimates, the error variance estimates, the *a*, the CR, the AVE and the √AVE values.

Table 4: Estimates for measurement model

Latent factors	Standardised loading estimates	Error variance estimates	a	CR	AVE	√AVE
Attitudes (F1)	.757	.572	.857	.799	.50	.71
	.851	.724				
	.797	.635				
	.736	.542				
Subjective norms (F2)	.683	.466	.870	.798	.50	.71
	.776	.602				
	.863	.745				
	.838	.702				
Product innovativeness (F3)	.637	.405	.758	.799	.50	.71
	.727	.528				
	.590	.348				
	.710	.504				
Correlations	F1↔F2: .582	F1↔F3: .356		F2↔F3: .394		

The computed results given in Table 4 suggest that both internal-consistency and composite reliability are evident, with all Cronbach alpha and CR values exceeding 0.70. Given the CR values above 0.70, standardised loading estimates above 0.50 and AVE values equal to 0.50, convergent validity is inferred. In addition, each of the √AVE values exceed their relevant correlation coefficients, thus suggesting discriminant validity.

The model fit indices computed for the measurement model also suggest good model fit, with a GFI of 0.959, an NFI of 0.954, a TLI of 0.959, a CFI of 0.968a SRMR of 0.032 and a RMSEA of 0.058. As such, female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products appears to be a three-factor model that displays internal-consistency reliability, composite reliability, nomological, convergent and discriminant validity, and good model fit.

Based on this measurement model, path analysis was undertaken where a structural model was developed in which it was theorised that subjective norms pertaining to beauty products and beauty product innovativeness have a significant positive influence on female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products.

The un-standardised and standardised regression coefficients, standard error estimates and p-values estimated by AMOS for this path analysis are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Path analysis estimates

Paths	Un-standardised β	β	SE	*p*
Subjective norms → Attitudes	.403	.523	.041	0.00
Product innovativeness → Attitudes	.112	.150	.036	0.00
β: beta coefficient; SE: standardised error; *p*: two-tailed statistical significance				

The structural model estimates reported in Table 5 indicate that each of the two regression paths tested are positive and statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$). Therefore, subjective norms (β = 0.52, p < 0.01) and beauty product innovativeness (β = 0.15, p < 0.01) have a statistically significant positive influence on female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products and, according to the computed squared multiple correlation coefficient (SMC) explain 36 percent of the variance in their attitudes towards beauty products. The structural model also returned good fit indices, with a GFI of 0.959, an NFI of 0.954, a TLI of 0.959, a CFI of 0.968, a SRMR of 0.032 and a RMSEA of 0.058. The structural model with the standardised regression estimates and the SMC are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Structural model
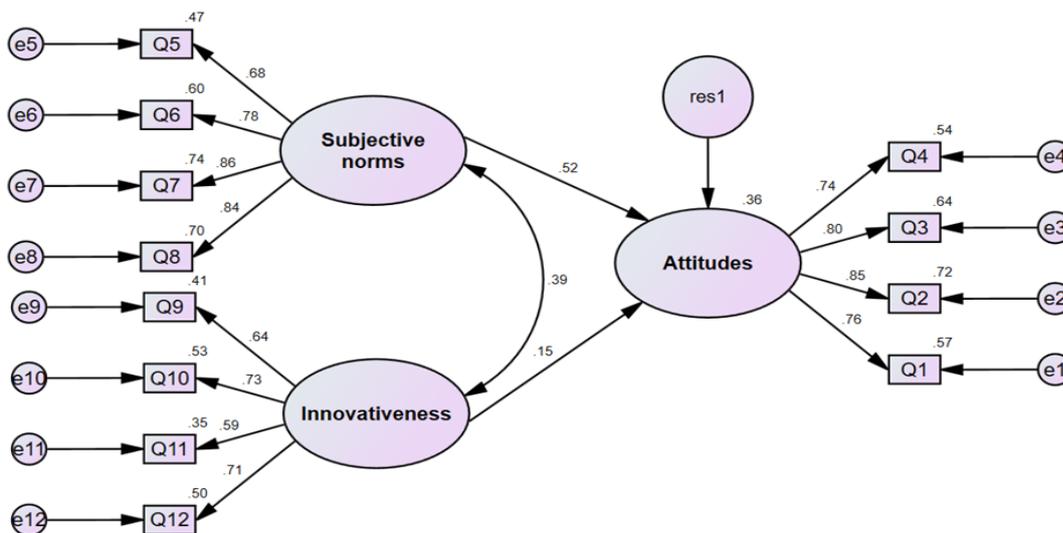
Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, in the South African context, female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products is a three-factor model comprising subjective norms, beauty product innovativeness and attitudes. This model exhibits internal-consistency reliability and composite reliability, as well as construct validity, including convergent, discriminant and nomological validity. Moreover, the tested model produced acceptable model fit indices.

The results indicate that female Generation Y students have a positive attitude towards beauty products and that subjective norms have a statistically significant positive influence on their attitudes towards such products. This is in keeping with studies carried out by Schepers and Wentzels (2007), and Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005). As such, beauty-product advertisement should incorporate typical members of the female Generation Y reference group so as to promote the subjective norms of using beauty-enhancing products. Moreover, given that Generation Y individuals are avid users of social networking sites, using such sites as a platform for self-presentation and social validation, beauty-product marketers need to ensure the visibility of their products on such sites in order to promote the social acceptability of using beauty-enhancing products amongst this generation.

The results of the study also indicate that beauty-product innovativeness is a statistical significant positive predictor of female Generation Y students' attitudes towards beauty products, which is in keeping with a study done by Park *et al.* (2007). Given that online beauty-product reviews and tutorials are known to encourage beauty-product innovativeness amongst members of this generation, marketers need to encourage female Generation Y customers to post online consumer reviews and consider sponsoring online female influencers who post beauty-product reviews and video tutorials with products.

When interpreting the results of this study, one important limitation needs to be considered, namely that the study made use of a non-probability convenience sample, which makes generalising the results of the study to the target population potentially problematic.

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