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Dissertation Presentation

Digital Marketing in the Cosmetic Industry within Dubai's International Business Context



Agenda

- Presentation of the research context and justification of the study
 - Analysis of the cosmetics industry and the specificities of the Dubai market
 - Identification of the research gap and formulation of the research problem
 - Presentation of the research aim, objectives, and research questions
 - Overview of the theoretical foundations and conceptual framework
 - Explanation of the methodological design, data collection, and research instruments
 - Presentation of the empirical results and synthesis of the main findings
 - Discussion of theoretical, managerial, and ethical implications
 - Presentation of the limitations, avenues for future research, and general conclusion
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Cosmetic Industry Overview

- The cosmetics industry constitutes one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors within global consumer markets.
- This industry is characterised by a strong symbolic and identity-related dimension, extending beyond purely functional product attributes.
- Cosmetic consumption is closely linked to issues of self-presentation, self-concept, and social representation.
- As a consequence, consumers typically exhibit high levels of involvement and sensitivity to brand image, credibility, and trust.
- The sector is marked by intense competitive pressure, with a proliferation of international and local brands competing for consumer attention.
- In this context, marketing communication and brand relationship management represent critical strategic resources.

Dubai Market Context

- Dubai constitutes a major international business hub and a strategic centre for luxury consumption in the Middle East region.
- The local market environment is characterised by a high concentration of multinational firms, international brands, and globally mobile consumers.
- The population structure of Dubai is exceptionally multicultural, comprising individuals from diverse national, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- Consumption patterns and responses to marketing communication are therefore shaped by heterogeneous cultural norms, values, and identity structures.
- In addition, the United Arab Emirates enforces specific regulatory, cultural, and ethical standards governing advertising and representation.
- Consequently, firms operating in this context must reconcile commercial performance objectives with cultural adaptation and ethical compliance.

Research Gap

Limitations in Existing Academic Literature

- A review of the extant academic literature reveals a fragmented treatment of digital marketing phenomena in the cosmetics industry.
 - Prior studies tend to examine consumer engagement, influencer marketing, technology adoption, and cultural factors in isolation rather than in an integrated manner.
 - Very limited scholarly work proposes comprehensive frameworks that simultaneously incorporate these dimensions.
 - Moreover, the majority of existing empirical studies are conducted in Western or culturally homogeneous market contexts.
 - There is a significant lack of research focusing on multicultural luxury markets such as Dubai.
 - As a result, current theoretical models remain insufficient to fully capture the complexity of digital marketing practices in such environments.
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Aim & Objectives

Defining the Scope of Research Goals

Research Aim:

- To analyse how digital marketing strategies implemented by cosmetic brands in Dubai influence consumer engagement, consumer trust, and brand loyalty within a multicultural market context.

Research Objectives:

- To identify and characterise the principal digital marketing strategies adopted by cosmetic brands operating in Dubai.
 - To examine the role of digital content and social media platforms in the formation of consumer engagement.
 - To investigate the impact of influencer marketing and perceived influencer credibility on consumer trust.
 - To assess the influence of Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality technologies on consumer experience and confidence.
 - To explore the moderating role of cultural and social identity factors in shaping consumer responses to digital marketing practices.
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Research Questions

- How do digital marketing strategies in Dubai's cosmetics sector influence consumer engagement, consumer trust, and brand loyalty?
- Which specific digital marketing practices and platform-related activities are most strongly associated with consumer engagement?
- To what extent does consumer engagement predict the development of consumer trust in cosmetic brands?
- How do influencer credibility and parasocial interaction mechanisms contribute to the formation of trust?
- How does the acceptance of Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality technologies influence consumer engagement and trust?
- How do cultural and social identity factors moderate the relationships between digital marketing practices and consumer responses?

Key Theories in Marketing

- Relationship marketing theory and the conceptualisation of long-term customer brand relationships.
- Consumer engagement theory, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of engagement.
- Trust and commitment theory within the relationship marketing and services marketing literature.
- Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a framework for analysing the adoption of AI and AR technologies.
- Social identity theory and cultural consumption theory as explanatory frameworks for consumer behaviour in multicultural contexts.
- Parasocial interaction theory as a theoretical basis for understanding influencer—follower relationships.



Influencer Marketing

- Influencer marketing refers to the strategic use of digitally mediated opinion leaders to shape consumer attitudes and behaviours.
- Influencers function as symbolic reference figures and perceived experts within specific content domains, particularly in the beauty sector.
- Their persuasive effectiveness is contingent upon perceived credibility, authenticity, and expertise.
- Parasocial interaction mechanisms foster the development of perceived interpersonal relationships between followers and influencers.
- These mechanisms enhance trust and persuasive impact, but also render brands vulnerable to reputational risks in cases of influencer misconduct.
- Consequently, influencer marketing represents both a strategic opportunity and a significant managerial risk.



Cultural Impact

- The Dubai market is characterised by pronounced cultural heterogeneity and social diversity.
- Consumers exhibit heterogeneous value systems, normative expectations, and identity structures.
- Cultural and religious norms exert a substantial influence on perceptions of advertising content, representation, and appropriateness.
- Social identity processes shape how individuals interpret, accept, or reject marketing messages.
- Marketing practices that are acceptable or effective for certain segments may be perceived as inappropriate or offensive by others.
- Therefore, cultural sensitivity constitutes a fundamental strategic and ethical requirement rather than a peripheral consideration.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

- Digital marketing strategies are conceptualised as antecedents of consumer engagement.
- Consumer engagement is conceptualised as a mediating mechanism linking marketing actions to relational outcomes.
- Consumer trust is conceptualised as a central relational construct predicting long-term brand loyalty.
- Influencer credibility and parasocial interaction processes are conceptualised as mechanisms strengthening trust formation.
- Acceptance of AI and AR technologies is conceptualised as a factor reinforcing engagement and trust.
- Cultural and social identity factors are conceptualised as moderating variables influencing the strength and direction of these relationships.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

- H1: Digital marketing strategies have a positive influence on consumer engagement in the cosmetics industry in Dubai.
- H2: Consumer engagement has a positive influence on consumer trust in cosmetic brands.
- H3: Consumer trust has a positive influence on brand loyalty.
- H4: Influencer credibility has a positive influence on consumer trust.
- H5: Parasocial interaction with influencers has a positive influence on consumer trust.
- H6: Acceptance of Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality technologies has a positive influence on consumer engagement.
- H7: Cultural and social identity factors moderate the relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer engagement.
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RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- H1 (Strategies → Engagement):
 - → Supported, as the results show strong levels of cognitive and emotional engagement in response to digital marketing practices.
- H2 (Engagement → Trust):
 - → Supported, as high engagement is consistently associated with strong trust perceptions in the findings and discussion.
- H3 (Trust → Loyalty):
 - → Supported, as trust is clearly linked to repurchase and recommendation intentions in the results interpretation.
- H4 & H5 (Influencer credibility & parasocial interaction → Trust):
 - → Supported, based on both consumer responses and professional interviews highlighting the central role of credible influencers in trust formation.

HYPOTHESES EVALUATION

- H6 (AI & AR acceptance → Engagement):
 - → Partially supported, as technology improves confidence and experience, but does not by itself create deep relational engagement.
- H7 (Cultural & social identity as moderator):
 - → Supported at an interpretative level, as both quantitative patterns and qualitative interviews show that cultural and ethical factors strongly condition the effectiveness of digital marketing in Dubai.
- Overall conclusion:
 - → The findings globally support the coherence of the proposed conceptual framework, within the limits of an exploratory, non-causal research design.



Methodology

- Adoption of a pragmatic research philosophy and a deductive analytical orientation.
 - Implementation of a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.
 - Justification of methodological triangulation in order to enhance both analytical rigour and contextual depth.
 - Quantitative component based on a survey of cosmetic consumers residing in Dubai.
 - Qualitative component based on semi-structured interviews with industry professionals.
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Data Collection

- Quantitative data collected through a structured online questionnaire.
- Empirical sample composed of 150 cosmetic consumers residing in Dubai.
- Survey: 150 valid responses ($n = 150$) from Dubai cosmetics consumers.
- Sample profile: 68% female / 32% male; 57% aged 21-35 (then 28% aged 36-50).
- Data collection process designed to capture both consumer-level perceptions and managerial-level strategic considerations.
- Interviews: 50 professionals, including marketing managers, digital strategists, brand representatives, and make-up artists; interviews typically lasted 30-45 minutes.



Instruments

Constructs are operationalised via established sources in Table 4.1:

- Digital marketing strategies: Proença & Martins (2024)
 - Engagement: Dessart et al. (2015)
 - Influencer credibility: Lou & Yuan (2019)
 - Parasocial interaction: Horton & Wohl (1956); Mushtaq et al. (2025)
 - Technology acceptance: Davis (1989); Fatima et al. (2023)
 - Trust: Morgan & Hunt (1994)
 - Loyalty: Oliver (1999)
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- Use of five-point Likert-type scales to measure engagement, trust, technology acceptance, and loyalty constructs.
 - Combination of standardised measurement (quantitative) and open-ended exploration (qualitative).



Quantitative Results Overview

- Platform exposure: 82% Instagram, 67% TikTok, 49% YouTube, 31% Facebook; 76% identify social media as primary discovery source.
- Mean scores (Likert 1—5): cognitive engagement $M = 4.10$, emotional engagement $M = 3.90$, behavioural engagement $M = 3.50$.
- Influencer credibility $M = 3.80$; technology acceptance $M = 3.70$; brand trust $M = 3.90$; brand loyalty $M = 3.90$.
- Pre-testing and adaptation of instruments to ensure conceptual clarity and contextual relevance.



Quantitative Results Overview

Figure 5.1: Social Media Platform Usage for Cosmetics Content

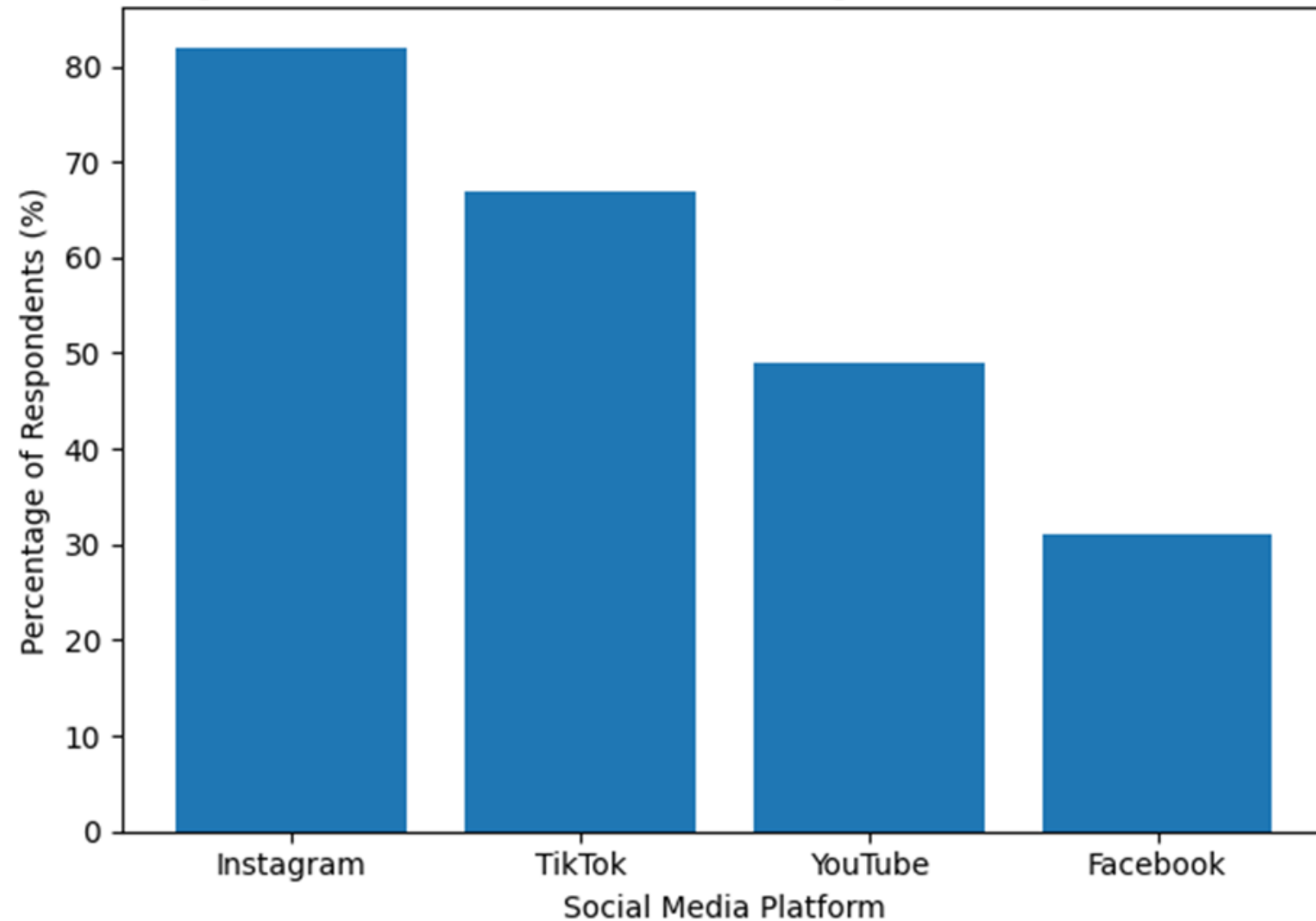
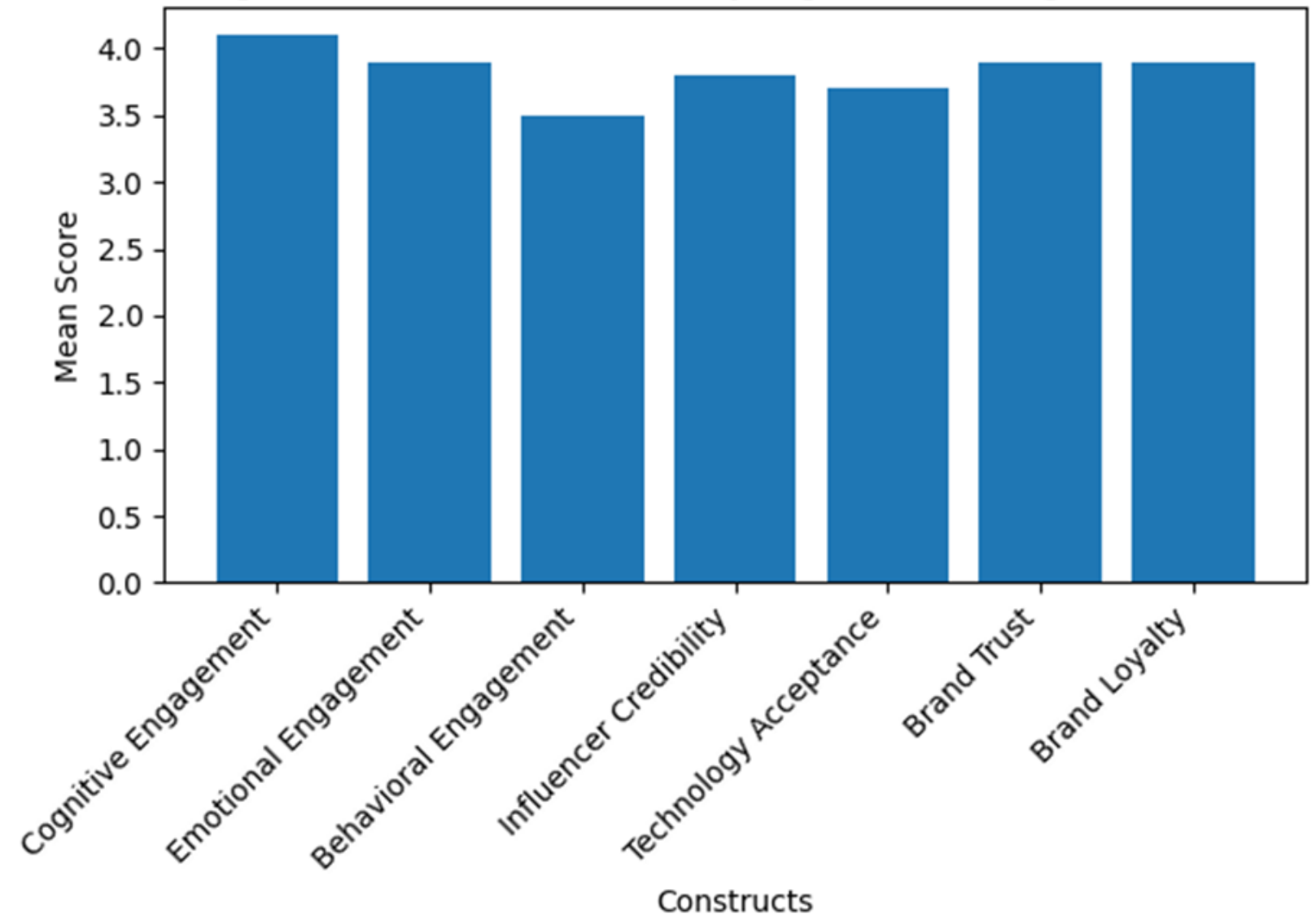


Figure 5.2: Mean Scores of Key Digital Marketing Constructs



Key Findings and Insights

- Engagement is strong at cognitive/emotional levels but weaker at behavioural level (suggesting attention and affect do not always convert into advocacy).
- Trust mechanisms around influencers are empirically visible: disclosure increases trust (69%) and over-commercialisation reduces trust (58%).
- AI/AR tools increase confidence and relevance, but privacy concerns remain (42%).
- AI and AR technologies contribute to the reduction of perceived risk and the enhancement of decision confidence.
- Trust predicts relational outcomes: 77% likely to repurchase from trusted brands; 68% willing to recommend trusted brands.



Qualitative Insights Overview

- Thematic analysis identified three dominant themes:
- Strategic role of influencer marketing
- Cultural adaptation and ethical sensitivity
- Adoption of AI and AR technologies
- Influencer marketing is described as strategic and values/audience alignment-driven rather than opportunistic.
- Cultural/ethical issues are described as central, including modest representation and transparency.
- AI/AR adoption is viewed as valuable, but constrained by cost, consumer education needs, and privacy concerns.
- Cultural and ethical sensitivity significantly conditions consumer evaluations of digital marketing practices.



Theoretical Implications

Enhancing Understanding of Digital Marketing Strategies

- Findings support the proposition that digital marketing strategies are positively related to engagement, with high cognitive (4.10) and emotional (3.90) engagement scores aligning with engagement theory's multidimensional structure.
 - Evidence indicates behavioural engagement is lower (3.50), reinforcing the argument that conversion to advocacy requires stronger relational incentives and perceived value.
 - The dissertation also argues TAM is incomplete without ethics/culture; it contributes by integrating ethical trust and contextual constraints into technology acceptance reasoning.
 - Theoretical integration of cultural and social identity factors into digital marketing relationship models.
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Managerial Implications

Practical Strategies for Cosmetic Brands

- Platform prioritisation should reflect actual consumer exposure: Instagram (82%) and TikTok (67%) are empirically dominant in this market.
 - Strategic importance of rigorous influencer selection and governance mechanisms.
 - Influencer governance should incorporate disclosure norms because 69% report higher trust when sponsorship is clearly disclosed.
 - Brands should use AR try-on and AI recommendation tools to reduce uncertainty (71% confidence effect; 65% relevance improvement), but address privacy concerns proactively (42% concern).
 - Loyalty-building should be explicitly trust-driven because repurchase and WOM intentions rise strongly for trusted brands (77% repurchase; 68% recommend).
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Ethical Implications

Responsible Marketing in the Cosmetics Industry

- Ethical sensitivity is described by professionals as a reputational risk management priority in Dubai (cultural insensitivity and lack of transparency can trigger backlash).
 - Technology ethics: interviewees raise data privacy and responsible data management as recurring concerns in AI/AR deployment.
 - Normative obligation to avoid culturally insensitive, misleading, or manipulative content.
 - Ethical considerations regarding the representation of beauty standards and social norms.
 - Conceptualisation of trust not only as a strategic asset but also as a moral commitment toward consumers.
 - Research ethics: participants were informed, consented, anonymised, and data stored securely for academic use.
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Limitations

- Empirical focus restricted to a single geographical and cultural context, limiting external validity.
 - Sample size remains constrained despite being sufficient for exploratory analytical purposes.
 - Cross-sectional research design precludes the observation of dynamic behavioural changes over time.
 - Potential presence of self-reporting and social desirability biases in survey responses.
 - Non-probability sampling limits generalisability beyond the Dubai context; self-reported responses may be influenced by social desirability bias.
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Future Research

Exploring Uncharted Areas in Digital Marketing

- Replication in other cultural contexts to test external validity beyond Dubai's multicultural luxury setting.
 - Comparative studies between Western, Middle Eastern, and Asian markets.
 - Longitudinal designs to examine evolution of engagement → trust → loyalty dynamics over time.
 - Deeper investigation of platform-specific dynamics and algorithmic mediation effects.
 - More granular segmentation approaches based on identity, lifestyle, and value orientations.
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Conclusion

- Digital marketing constitutes a central strategic pillar of competitiveness within the cosmetics industry in Dubai.
- Consumer engagement, trust, and loyalty form a coherent and interdependent relational sequence.
- Influencer marketing and emerging technologies represent powerful but ethically sensitive strategic instruments.
- Cultural and ethical adaptation is a structural requirement for sustainable success in this market.
- Long-term brand performance is fundamentally dependent on the construction and maintenance of trust-based consumer relationships.

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Thank You