HOW SOCIAL NETWORK INFLUENCER INFLUENCES ON BUYING PROCESS OF SKINCARE VIA ONLINE PLATFORM IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, social media platforms are becoming popular and used by everyone all over the world. Influencers on social media platform can influence people more in every market. Thai people have more level of interesting in beauty industry especially in skincare market. This research aims to study how social network influencers influence customers to buy skincare via online platforms by focusing on buying process.

This research collected 30 participants who have been influenced by the social media influencers. All of the interviewees have experienced making decision to buy skincare by the influencers. This research show the result via buying process model that in the process of searching for information is most influence to customers, following by the need recognition of the interviewees.

KEY WORDS: Social media/ Influencer/ Skincare/ Buying process

24 pages

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Everyone in this world agrees that the youth of the world are widely used on social media. What may happen to people that are surprising is the fastest growing of social media users are not a new generation, it is a 45-54 year old group that currently has more than 55% of people that have at least only one social media profile (Newman, 2014). Society has reached a turning point which allows many people to fully communicate for business. Business communication changed with social media.Overall, social trends are changing the way we do business, so the way they communicate with our target customers and employees, as well as our work and professional lives, is still blended together (Newman, 2014). As already mentioned, 41% of corporate leaders and managers are trying to invest more in social media to help grow in the areas mentioned above such as brand awareness and new client acquisition. Word of mouth is a form of influence for customers with the rise of social media (Solis & Webber, 2012). These new services helped businesses keep track of how information is spreading online and how it is impacting the gross profits. The digital influence is changing the way consumers make decisions and take action.

Many companies try to learn about digital influencers, their benefits increase. Marketers take time to know how to connect with the influencers so the brands can move forwards. It all starts with understanding the influence of digital systems on developing meaningful strategies and determining the desired results. By better understanding of how digital influences the brands and by the helping of social media influencing, the companies can define the positive conversations to get the ultimate result. In the next two to three years, digital influence will become a key component of business marketing. (Solis & Webber, 2012).

Digital influence is one of the most trending of marketing on social media (Solis & Webber, 2012). Many merchants are rating and ranking daily consumer

activities on social websites. With the additional services to launch at the forefront, the brand's ability to connect with the influential consumer is defined as a standard protocol. The effective digital influence strategies, the companies can create the word of mouth, increase brand lift and influence more consumers' action more than traditional marketing.

Skincare is a market share growing faster than other parts of the beauty industry. Skincare sales increased 13% last year in the United States, while makeup rose only 1% during the same period. Online beauty retailers grew by 24% at that time with leading skincare products. The size of cosmetic skin care products worldwide will increase by $ 45 billion between 2018-2023 which accelerates almost 6% during the forecast period.

The growth of the market size is due to the presence of the premium brands as the customers are interested in expanding their knowledge about skincare products. This help the premium skincare companies expand their market share, improve reliability and create digital destinations (Technavio, 2020).

New research shows that "Influence" is changing the way of marketing of the beauty industry by drawing attention from social media, especially Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube. The competition among companies in attracting the attention of consumers, influencers will be rewarded with captivating photo and video packages as consumers reject more traditional marketing such as advertisements on television and magazines (Gerdeman, 2019).

In evaluating the beauty products, women said that they trust third-party products reviews more than the company's advertisements. They said that the influencers make the most buying decisions to reach them (Gerdeman, 2019).

1.2 Research Questions

How social network influencer influences on buying process of skincare via online platforms in Thailand?

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research aims to investigate how social network influencer, blogger, net idol or celebrity, influences on buying process of skincare via online platforms in Thailand by identifying what motivate and make consumers confident in buying skincare products and what are the main factors that consumers take into consideration when they are deciding in buying skincare products.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Influencer

Skincare business is growing every year. New skincare brands are continuously emerging. However, with high competition in this market, a lot of companies try to do marketing in many ways such as in the television, billboard, word of mouth, celebrity as a presenter or even on online platforms. Due to digital disruption, online platforms are widely used in marketing. There are also many types of marketing in online channels such as advertising online, direct emails, search engines marketing, pages in social platforms, social influencers and more. Nowadays influencer marketing is a new trend and it is also a strong marketing. Influencers are people who can lead products or services to others (Enge, 2012). They have the ability to make people believe what you believe in (Chinnasamy & Tahrim, 2019). Many businesses use influential marketing to influence customers because influencers have the ability to encourage the awareness and support your brand initiatives by retweeting, liking, commenting and other social interactions. Good influencers have abilities to make trust into the buying process (Range & Sharma, 2014). Social influencers can design themselves as role models in many fields and they can convince followers to buy those products and services(Chinnasamy & Tahrim, 2019). Influential marketing is on personal blogs, commercial websites, and social networking such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat. Companies will send the free products to the influencers which hope that they decide to review online to their followers. However companies can pay the influencers to post and promote their brands and products on their social media platforms (Sammis, 2016). Recommendations from influencers in these posts can lead their followers to the search for, purchase and use the brands or products (Flynn, Goldsmith & Eastman, 1996).

2.2 Social Media

Social media is a mega platform that is used by everyone all over the world. The Global Web Index in 2015 reports that social media users are spending around 1.72 hours per day in social media platforms, which makes up for approximately 28% of all online activity which nowadays people may use more (Bennett, 2015). Many businesses use this channel to do marketing so social media has become the primary way of communication with customers. People more commonly use social media to communicate with each other. The four platforms that people mostly used are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Each platform fills a different user's needs and it also helps the company to create a brand. Social networking is an application or website which users can connect to others by creating the personal profiles, information profiles, inviting friends and sending instant messages to each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Social media use two-way communication platforms that create online discussions that are open to the public or allow consumers to ask questions or make comments and receive feedback which is totally different from media channels in the past (Soma, 2019). Social media platforms are becoming increasingly popular among friends. So it is another important reason for brands to connect to their customers on social media. However, there are a lot of social media platforms to connect with customers, the marketers should be more concerned about their target customers to mostly focus on that platform in addition to provide enough information and do marketing in that mobile application which allow consumers to engage with the brand everyday (Kim & Adler, 2011).

2.3 Skincare

Nowadays, skincare business is more and more popular. There are many new companies of skincare brands. However, when we're talking about skincare, it is hard to know which brands are the best one for your skin. Skin care products are numerous and confusing. Therefore Skin Care businesses tried hard to do marketing themselve to be a popular one. There are many marketing channels in this type of business. For example, television advertising, billboards, social influencers and more.

Skincare originated in ancient Egypt. Skincare products are used for the same purpose and combined with consumer value. People called most skincare today as the moisturizers. Moisturizers are substances that can improve skin. Skincare is like a vehicle to bring the active ingredients to inner skin that deliver to skin to decrease dehydration, deliver photoprotection, and provide antioxidant properties (Draelos, 2010). As a result skincare is a substance that is beneficial to skins. People applied skincare to enhance their skin and recovery from damage. Thailand can be considered as a hub of skincare products manufacturer in Southeast Asia as having 40 percent of market share (DBD, 2016). Women tend to take care of their skin as they perceive that the real beauty of skin comes from inside out. Nowadays, there are many types of skincare to solve many skin problems such as hydrating, whitening, youthing, wrinkle and more.

To study how much influencers influence on customers, there are the women surveyed especially targeting Facebook who used the keywords as "beauty" and "skincare". This study found that these women buy a lot of skincare and moreover more than 40% said that they buy multiple products each month. The women surveyed don't need to attract influencers with the largest online followers. Many people like to follow the influencers who don't have the fame called "micro influencers", noting that people with a small fan base tend to review straightforwardly (Gerdeman, 2019).

2.4 Buying Process

Successful marketing is customers buying products. The internet makes information flow easily from the seller to the buyer and even from the buyer to the buyer which will influence the buying process and purchase decision. Before making any buying process, consumers must know about the products first. Engel, Blackwell & Kollat (1968) have developed consumers buying process as below which is a guidance model in decision making and purchasing process for shoppers which consists of need recognition, information search, evaluation alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior.
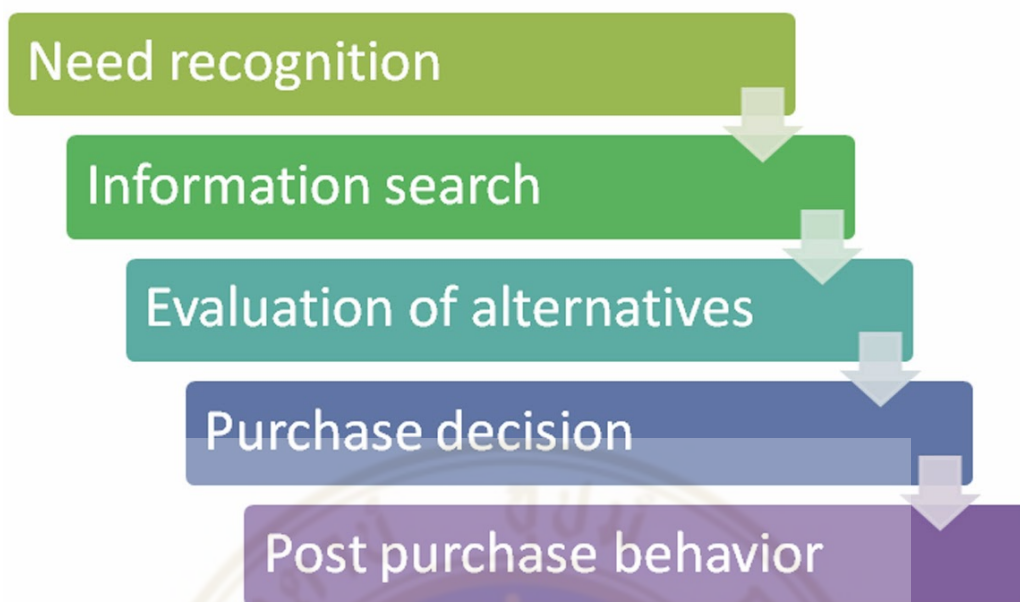
Figure 2.1 Consumers Buying Process Model (Engel, Blackwell & Kollat, 1968)

The consumer buying process starts from recognition. If there is no awareness of demand, no purchase will be made (Perreau, 2013). Consumer perception of demand can come from internal and external stimuli. Internal stimuli are individual physiological needs and external stimuli are like being advertised. After consumers are aware of the needs, they will begin to search for information about those products. If there are many products, consumers will need to find more information to make the decision. Customers can have internal information from experiences or external information obtained from friends, family, or influencers from offline and online. Once the consumer has received all the information, the consumer will assess what is most appropriate for their needs. Customers will evaluate in two perspectives which are product functionality and brand value awareness (Perreau, 2013). When consumers differentiate the product, the purchase process will continue. After purchasing and using the product, consumers will re-evaluate that they have made the right choice in terms of satisfaction and expectations to achieve.

2.5 Research Framework
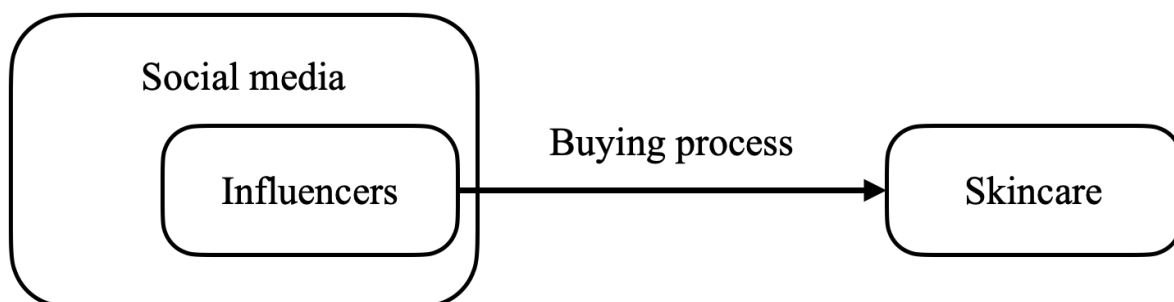
Figure 2.2 Scope of an exploratory research study of the effect of influencer
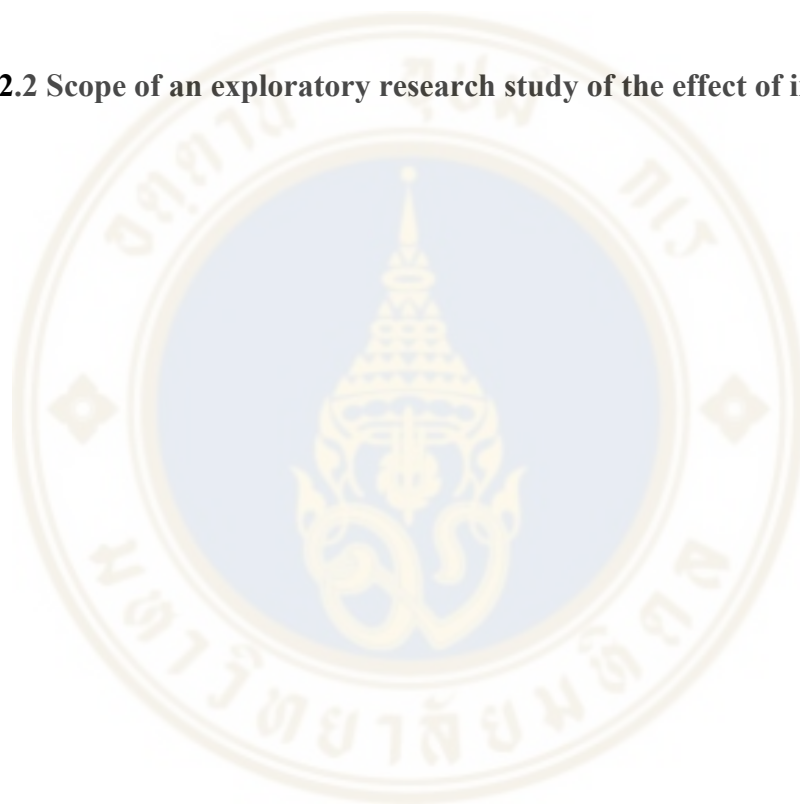
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

collecting and analyzing data has two methods: qualitative research and quantitative research. The quantitative research involves numbers and statistics, and the quantitative research involves words and definitions (Streefkerk, 2019). Each research has different objectives and methods however both are important for reaching different types of knowledge.

Quantitative research is a survey of many people by questionnaires based on score answers (0 to 10) and open-ended (there are a few open answers in quantitative questionnaires) (Armato, 2017). The accuracy of data depends on the more statistics and information you have. The most quantitative data sources are surveys, that are collected by personal cell phone. These used the same question and the same way to ask many people. On the other hand, quantitative data is easier to gather and analyze and depends on a large number of samples. The quantitative method depends on the data that can 'Measure objectively' with numbers. The numbers and statistical analysis by comparing. This reason is more 'scientific' and attracts people who are looking for clear answers to specific cause questions. Quantitative analysis is done faster because it involves the use of software. forasmuch many volunteers allow generalization in a group than the research sample. Highly popular based on quantitative data, including questionnaires and other statistical records (Gupta, 2018). Quantitative data, including close-ended data such as attitude measurements such as score level (such as scale, rating), behavior (such as observation lists) and performance measurement tools. This type of data analysis includes statistical analysis scores collected by tools (such as questionnaires) or checklists to answer research questions or to test hypotheses. Quantitative research is shown in numbers and graphs. It is used to test or confirm hypotheses and theories. This research can be used to create conclusive facts about topics.

Qualitative research examines a few people by sending the product itself, So, collecting more details about behavior in a small sample of users. (Armato, 2017).

Qualitative research process is focused on understanding and discovering participants' experiences, perspectives, and ideas that explore purpose, reality, or meaning . (Hiatt, 1986). This research allows you to gather insights on topics that are not well understood. (Streefkerk, 2019). Qualitative research supports an in-depth understanding of investigated situations and due to time constraints. Generally, it involves a small sample of participants. For this reason, these findings are limited to samples studied and cannot be applied to other contexts or to the wider population. Qualitative analysis generally takes longer than quantitative analysis (McCombes, 2019). Qualitative data is collected by many methods. For example, an interview by asking open-ended questions with a group of respondents to a discussion by talking between people about the topic to gather opinions that can be used for additional ethnographic research by participating in the community. Or an organization for a long time, Time to observe closely the culture and behavior, case study by in-depth study of an individual, group, event or organization, or literature review by surveying works published by other authors.

3.1 Research Design

In this research, we use a qualitative method to focus on finding and understanding the experiences, perspectives and ideas of customers affected by social networks that influence the purchase of skin care products via online platforms. In Thailand This qualitative research uses in-depth interviews to understand the process of buying skincare products step by step.

3.2 Sample Selection

The in-depth interviews were conducted with the 30 participants who live in Thailand. Their ages are between 20-30 years old because these age groups have experience about social network influencers influencing their decision on buying skincare differently.

3.3 Questions

1. How often do you use skincare?

2. What is the name of your skincare?

3. How do you know this brand?

4. Have you ever used social media to search for skincare?

5. What apps do you use the most to search for skincare?

6. How will social media affect your skincare purchase?

7. What is your purchasing decision process?

CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents results after conducting qualitative research. Summary of research Data from 30 interviewees analyzed and grouped into the buying process.

4.1 Finding and Data Analysis

By the buying process model of Engel, Blackwell and Kollat, 1968, there are 5 steps before the people make a decision to buy. After an interview with thirty people who bought skin care products from seeing their influence on social media. The buying process has 5 steps, which influencers can affect Many people are affected by social influences in more than one step. All interviewers tend to use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and others that can be seen in advertisements.

The first step is Need recognition. Consumers are aware of their problems or needs which may come from their skin problems that can be satisfied by skin care in the market. This is often identified as the first and most important step in the customer's decision making process. A purchase can't be made without acknowledging the demand.Demand is the source or purchasing force of behavior. The need or problem pushes people to buy the product. Demand may arise from internal stimuli such as his skin problems or external stimuli such as word of mouth advertising, social influencers and others. At this stage, interviewers say that they often recognize brands from influential people. They follow regularly on Youtube and Instagram channels. Some interviewers say that they have skin problems, so they search for skin care brands on social media. Many influencers create demand for consumers, which may come from themselves or the brand's sponsors. However, the interviewees believe in influencers who verify the truth rather than from the

sponsor.Therefore, fifteen in thirty (50%) of the interviewees created a demand from watching influencers. They say "I follow influencers on Youtube" or "I follow directly on social media reviews".

The second step is to search for information. Once the demand is accepted, consumers are urged to search for more information and enter the search process to find out what they feel is the best solution for their skin.They search for information from both internal and external business environments in order to identify and evaluate sources of information related to central purchasing decisions. They can receive information about products from various sources such as personal information sources. (Including family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc.) Commercial sources (including advertisements, salespeople, distributors, packaging, displays, etc.) Public sources (including mass media, consumer ranking organizations, etc.) which are confidential for providing information And experimental data sources (Including management, usage monitoring, etc.) By collecting information from relevant sources, consumers can learn about various products and brands that are available in the market. He scrutinizes all brands in order, such as collection (brand), a set of perceptions of suitable sets and a set of options. In the second step of the purchase process, customer information searches are more important to finding information. They want to know the details of the product. Most of the interviewees were affected by influencers at this stage. Twenty-one respondents agreed to this process (70%) However, the interviewee is not only But only receiving information from influencers But most of the interviewees also saw comments from Twitter as well "When I know my problem, I'll find a solution on social media."

The second step is to search for information once the demand is accepted consumers are allergic to search for more information and enter the search process to find out what they feel is the best solution for their skin they search for information from both internal and external business environment in order to identify and evaluate sources of information related to Central purchasing decisions .

When information is in the hands, consumers will be evaluated for alternatives by using the information to evaluate the brand in the alternative set.Assessing alternatives is the third step of the buying process. Various points of information gathered from various sources are used to evaluate various options and

attractiveness. As you would expect, customers will evaluate different products or brands at this stage, based on product characteristics, alternatives - that are capable of delivering the benefits that customers are looking for. The most influential factor in this process is the customer's attitude. Usually, they choose one of the best brands that give maximum satisfaction. When choosing a skin care product, many criteria are considered while evaluating options such as the benefits, characteristics and quality offered by the brand, prices that are changed by different brands, popularity, brand image or reputation, and others. Most reasonable brands that meet the above conditions are more likely to be in demand.Evaluation of the interviewer's choice is not relevant. The interviewees said that they have only one product and want to know their opinions. Since there are many brands in the market, they have brands in mind. Therefore, only five interviewees (16.67%) were affected by influencers at this stage. The interviewer said "Sometimes I see a lot of criticism, so I found more solutions on social media."

After evaluating the options, consumers will decide to buy the product. They decide to buy the best brand. But their decisions depend on the attitude and environmental factors of others. The final step is where the purchase takes place. Philip Kotler (2009) states that the final purchase decision may be 'disrupted' by two factors: negative feedback from other customers and the level of motivation to accept the recommendation. For example, after three previous steps, customers have chosen to buy a new skincare product. However, because her very good friend, beauty blogger, gave her negative feedback, she is bound to change her preferences. In addition, decisions may be disrupted due to unforeseen situations such as sudden job loss. Only the most attractive brands that can provide more benefits when compared to the price paid can be chosen by comparing one brand with others. The comparison shows the superiority / inferiority of the brand. In the purchase decision process, influencers affect customers before making a purchase. Some interviewees said that they have some influence they believe in.Therefore, they buy the following influential products. At this stage there are nine interviewers (30%). They say "Some influential people who are frankly criticized can make me decide to buy that skincare product."

At the final stage of the decision-making process of the buyer, the behavior after the purchase, the consumer proceeds according to the satisfaction or

dissatisfaction. At this stage, consumers will consider whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the purchase results.This is where knowledge disagreements occur. "Am I making the right decisions?" They will compare the products with their previous expectations and will be satisfied or dissatisfied. Therefore, these steps are important in retaining customers. This may affect the decision-making process for purchasing similar products from the same company in the future, affecting search and evaluation of other options. If customers are satisfied, this result is brand loyalty and search. And evaluation of alternative procedures is often followed quickly or completely skipped. As a result, brand loyalty is the ultimate goal of many companies. On the basis of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, it is common for customers to publish positive or negative comments about the product. This may be a check through social media network websites or viral. Companies should be careful when creating positive after sales communications to attract customers and make the process as efficient as possible. Consumers buy products with certain expectations Although he made a systematic decision But it does not guarantee complete satisfaction. Real satisfaction may not be as expected. He may encounter problems or defects in the product while in use. It is interesting for marketers to know that consumers are highly satisfied, satisfied, satisfied or dissatisfied. Consumer satisfaction is the function of the relationship between expected / perceived performance (expectation) and actual performance. In the post-purchase decision, there were no influential interviewers at this stage. They say "If I have some brands that work on my skin, I will buy again. But if not, I will not buy anymore "
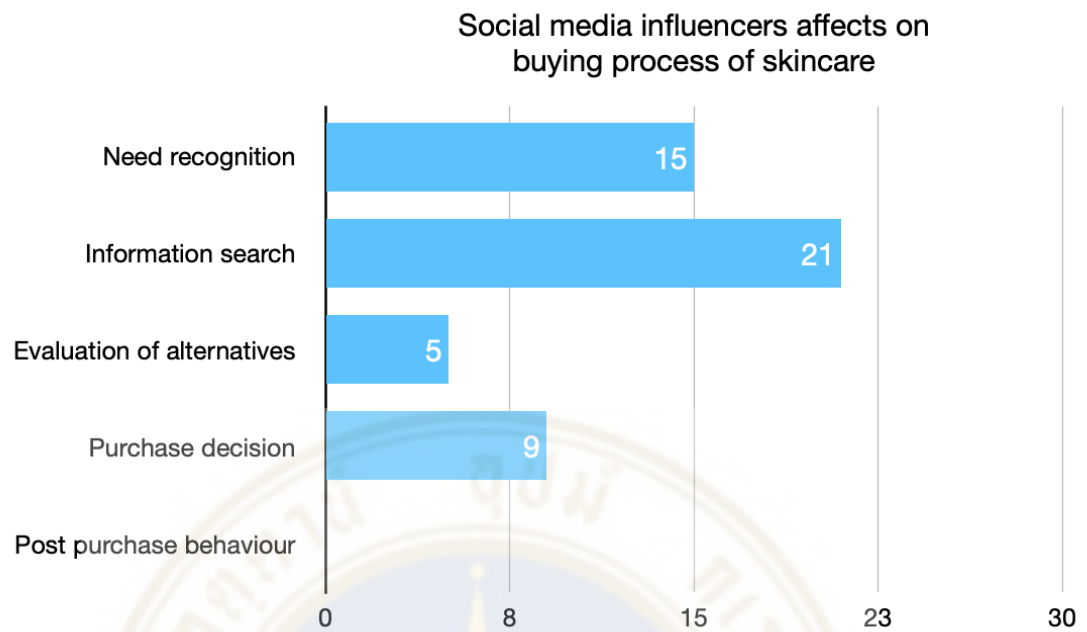
Figure 4.1 Social media influencers effects on buying process of skincare

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

This chapter will summarize how influencers can affect the consumer skin care purchasing process and analyze how marketers should focus on marketing their products.

5.1 Summary

The skin care industry is growing rapidly and is highly competitive in the market because there are many new entrepreneurs because small companies are interested in the skin care market, especially actors or actors that influence the perception of General people Skin care business in Thailand that can be very profitable even if the global economy fluctuates or decreases. The main cause of skin care is growing fast because people care more about their beauty than women or men. To be successful in the highly competitive skin care market, skin care companies must consider the factors that affect consumers in their buying habits. The primary objective of this research is to find how social media influencers influence customers in the buying process model. In our study, we have defined the steps of the buying process from a literature review. Conduct surveys and invite respondents to view skin care product reviews. Those who do not view the review will be eliminated and unable to complete the interview. From research, data collection and analysis, many factors show that interesting and relevant things This research focuses on people between the ages of 20-30 years, most of which are female (66.67%). Influence influences the skin care purchase process in 5 steps in the demand awareness process (50%) Data search (70%) Evaluation of alternatives (16.67%) Buying decisions (30%) and post-purchase behavior (0%)

In summary, influencers are one of the marketing strategies that can benefit brand influencers and even customers in some ways. However, it requires

different strategies for each step of the buying process. In addition, influential support is not an issue that affects customers' perceptions about the apparel business. The more influential criticism is, the better the customer can trust the brand and the product.

5.2 Recommendations

As for the recommendations that we know that the skin care business in Thailand is highly competitive due to the brand being imported every year, therefore, companies or entrepreneurs need to understand the buying process of social influencers. This article aims to introduce a marketing strategy that influences small e-commerce brands on social media, as it is an opportunity for small clothing brands to do more advertising or create online awareness and open to users.

Influential marketing tends to be a form of subconscious marketing. By using influencers, consumers will unknowingly penetrate brand content. At the same time, the brand may unknowingly affect consumers' perceptions and interests. Micro-Influencer Can do better in terms of decision making to buy user triggers on social media. It's a natural fact of a small e-commerce brand from the start with a small marketing budget. There is another reason why brands should pay attention to micro influencers today.Due to the fact that the social media platform has been changed to support quality content, Gnack's CEO Chris Gonzalez believes that posts or comments from "Small influence" will increase the visibility of the target people.As we saw, photos from friends and family members tend to focus on any social platform, even if the less influential people have less followers than celebrities. But getting involved in advertising and promoting online stores can create more profits in terms of return on investment. Trust and close relationships with the audience are essential for customers' purchasing decisions.

For problem awareness, marketers can create opportunities by taking the time to "create problems" for customers, whether they know they exist or not. You are starting a buying process that can begin with content marketing. Marketers can share facts and testimonials about your products or services that can be provided and ask questions to draw targeted customers into the buying process. This can help the prospect realize that they have needs that should be addressed.

To find information, the best way to market your needs is to build your brand or your customer's brand as an industry leader or specialist in a particular field. The search process can identify new needs. Finding information relating to physical and mental activities that consumers must perform in order to make decisions and solve problems through the market. Ultimately, most consumers have learned that the benefits of finding information can do more than cost. Searching for information in detail may save you money, improve the quality of your selection, or reduce your risk.

In evaluating alternative marketing methods, not only But make the process easier But also building relationships with trusted customers From a marketer's perspective, it's important to understand your target consumer evaluation criteria. You must show these qualities in order to be selected in the selection set.

In the purchase decision process, providing as much information as the best service provider to meet this need is essential. Information relating to the needs created in step one, along with why your brand If customers walk away from the purchase, this is the time to bring them back. The four steps are the most important thing in the consumer buying process. Is this profitable or lost? In order to improve marketing during this buying process, the seller must answer questions about the buying habits of consumers. Those answers will increase the chances of closing the sale and maximizing value while buying. Marketers should look for opportunities to influence things according to their needs. At the point of purchase, product pricing, labeling and packaging can have a tremendous influence at this stage of the process. Product sales, product displays, convenience, and convenience in finding products may make consumers make an informed choice. Determining whether a consumer goes through a decision-making process is actually a difficult research because it can vary greatly from consumer to consumer.

Just because it has been purchased, the process is not yet finished. In the post-purchase evaluation process, customers must decide whether they are satisfied with the decision made. For this reason, it is important to send surveys, follow-ups, and emails that thank customers for their purchase.

If marketers take the time to understand the 5 steps that consumers buy, they can build your marketing strategy at each step and lead to increased conversions and long-term customer loyalty.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations. The first is the time constraint - since the research time is limited, the second is the interviewee. According to this research, only 30 interviewers consider the sample size, which is an imbalanced number of genders. In this case, 20 women and 10 males. In addition, this research must be translated from English to Thai in the questionnaire, which may be caused by misunderstandings of the question for the interviewer. Finally, this research surveyed respondents who live in Bangkok only, which may lead to limitations in the attitude of people in other areas because people in different areas have different perceptions about Intention to buy a fitness tracker.

For future research, the researcher should increase the size of the sample and expand the study area from Bangkok to the suburbs. In addition, the researcher should conduct quantitative and qualitative research not only But will get many results only But they will also understand deeply the factors that may stimulate Thai people to be willing to buy skincare products. In addition, expanding and developing more potential factors to conduct more inaccurate research may lead to a wider understanding of this field. More data should be gathered with a higher number of respondents and widely distributed to different age groups, monthly income, education and occupation levels. In addition, future research can consider factors affecting purchase behavior and satisfaction with skincare products.

Finally, future research should observe the marketing campaigns and advertisements of skincare products to see the impact on consumer behavior in offline and online stores in order to understand customer satisfaction and as a way to improve quality. The product to meet the needs of customers.

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