

# “The effect of variety seeking and status consumption on generation Y consumers’ attitude toward beauty products: The mediating role of innovativeness”

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# THE EFFECT OF VARIETY SEEKING AND STATUS CONSUMPTION ON GENERATION Y CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD BEAUTY PRODUCTS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INNOVATIVENESS

## Abstract

The cosmetic industry is a highly lucrative market in South Africa. Individuals of the Generation Y cohort represent an essential current and future market segment for various industries, including the beauty product industry. The purpose of this study is to determine the direct and indirect effects of variety seeking and status consumption on attitudes through beauty product innovativeness among female Generation Y students. This study used a self-administered questionnaire. The sample includes female Generation Y students at a traditional university, a comprehensive university, and a university of technology in the Gauteng province. The study yielded 610 adequate responses. The data were analyzed using principal component factor analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and path analysis with mediation tests. The study presents a four-factor model: status consumption, variety seeking, beauty product innovativeness, and consumer attitude. Status consumption statistically, significantly, and positively affect beauty product innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.350$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ) and consumer attitude ( $\beta = 0.107$ ,  $p = 0.053 < 0.01$ ). Variety seeking has a statistically significant and positive influence on beauty product innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.276$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ) but an insignificant on consumer attitude ( $\beta = 0.043$ ,  $p = 0.459 > 0.01$ ). Lastly, beauty product innovativeness was a statistically significant predictor of attitude ( $\beta = 0.286$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). These results suggest that beauty product innovativeness mediates the relationship between variety-seeking and consumer attitudes of the Generation Y cohort toward beauty products.

## Keywords

fashion marketing, female consumers, physical appearance, South Africa

## JEL Classification

M31, M37

## INTRODUCTION

As the fashion industry, particularly the beauty product industry, grows, it becomes a lucrative market for organizations to penetrate, both nationally and internationally (Cvetkovska, 2022; Marci, 2019). Even through a global economic crisis, the beauty product market remained robust. Approximately US\$483bn was reported in consumer spending across the globe in 2020, which is expected to increase to US\$716bn by 2025 (Licata, 2021). A potential reason for this continued growth and success is that women seek to care for themselves and are willing to spend all their available income and more on beauty (Ching, 2020).

As the physical appearances of women carry more weight within society as opposed to men's physical appearance, particularly in the professional arena, the likelihood that women are more inclined to use fashion to demonstrate their identity and uniqueness is becoming

ing increasingly prevalent (Bakewell et al., 2006; Czernecka, 2018). This purchasing power plays a pivotal role in increasing the economic impact these consumers make (Pudaruth et al., 2015). Females, through their influence and buying power, drive 70 to 80% of all consumer purchases (Nelson, 2022). Consequently, there is a need to develop an understanding of female consumers' consumption patterns regarding beauty products (Chen et al., 2011) for organizations that wish to be effective when attracting the attention of this intended target market while simultaneously persuading these consumers to purchase the beauty products they offer.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Generation Y cohort is deemed aware of and follows fashion trends (Noble et al., 2009). These consumers are likely to regularly purchase products and services to keep abreast of the latest fashion trends and satisfy their needs (Runyan et al., 2013). The products and services purchased range from designer clothing to branded retail products, orthodontic treatments, cosmetic surgery, beauty products, exercise apparatus, fitness club memberships, facial and body treatments, massages, and diet products (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2008).

Beauty products are essential for females within the Generation Y cohort, which has seen the increased use of beauty products as they associate beauty products with fun. Not only do these consumers see the value in spending significant amounts of money on beauty products, but they continue to use these products to enhance their physical appearances, increasing their confidence levels and making them feel good about themselves (Rose, 2014). Compared to previous generations, the consumers within the Generation Y cohort are more beauty conscious, which has led to these consumers spending a substantial amount of their disposable income on beauty products (Dhanoa & Goyal, 2018; Pudaruth et al., 2015).

Generation Y refers to individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004). Consequently, as of 2022, these individuals would be between 17 and 36 years old. In 2021, South Africa's population was estimated at 60 142 978, with an estimated 43% of the total population being Generation Y, while the female portion of the Generation Y cohort was estimated to be 49.6% (Statistics South Africa, 2021).

The size of this cohort highlights its importance to South African marketers and retailers; moreover, individuals of this cohort who are engaged in

tertiary education are not only seen as individuals who can earn higher salaries in the future, but their standing in society will also improve (Bevan-Dye & Surujlal, 2011; Day & Newburger, 2002). Furthermore, more Generation Y females possess a tertiary education qualification than their male counterparts; however, this is more evident in older individuals of the Generation Y cohort (Hawkins & Motherbaugh, 2013, p. 126). Consequently, well-paid occupations, significant spending power, and desirable lifestyles of female Generation Y individuals result in these consumers becoming an emerging economic force (Newman, 2015). This is due to a large number of Generation Y females engaged in tertiary education and their tendency to spend a considerable portion of their disposable income on fashion-related products. There is also the increased likelihood that these individuals, once they graduate, will be more inclined to have a high standard of living, which goes hand in hand with higher future spending power (Kinley et al., 2010; Gardyn, 2002).

Attitudes encapsulate the evaluations, feelings, or tendencies individuals possess about a behavior, product, or service, which may be either positive or negative (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2013). They are innate individual responses, which are continuous and unchanging and determine the level of favorable or unfavorable feelings individuals possess about emotional, rational, and behavioral components (Zikmund & Babin, 2013). Although attitudes may be relatively consistent, they can change, highlighting that an attitude is not permanent (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014). Furthermore, attitudes may be influenced by direct marketing efforts, mass-media advertising, or word-of-mouth communication (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014).

Consumers' attitudes, behavior, and beliefs, particularly young consumers, are influenced by their social environment (Fernandez, 2009), which encom-

passes all the individuals consumers engage with (Luo, 2019). For example, consumers search product information before making a purchase decision, particularly a high-involvement purchase decision. This involves a variety of sources, such as personal knowledge and experience, family, friends, peers, traditional media including print and broadcast media, the Internet, as well as salespeople and sometimes fellow consumers (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009).

Previous research highlighted the importance of variety seeking (Hou & Elliot, 2016; Lim & Cham, 2015; Song et al., 2014; Tang & Chin, 2007), status consumption (Flynn & Goldsmith, 2016; Goldsmith et al., 2010; Sandhu & Paim, 2016), innovativeness (Park et al., 2007), and the relationship of these factors toward attitude formation among individuals.

Variety seeking is the inclination of consumers to switch between assorted products or brands when individuals need to use a product or service that is deemed new or unique (Hou & Elliot, 2016; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2018). Consumers, who are more inclined to seek variety, are more likely to be influenced by various motivating factors. These include the internal need a consumer may have for stimulation or novelty, external factors, namely price promotions and retail environment changes, or preference uncertainty, which includes consumers' desires for diverse investment portfolios (Kahn, 1995). Moreover, consumers engage in variety-seeking behavior related to product categories with enough brand alternatives (Tang & Chin, 2007).

Based on the amount of advertising content in the media, this will likely influence consumers' attitudes toward a range of products and services, such as beauty products. Consumers' reference group also affects their purchase decisions, as they are more likely to act following the prescribed norms or standards determined by a specific reference group (Roberts-Lombard & Parumasur, 2017). According to Park and Lessig (1977), consumers, including the youth, are more likely to be susceptible to the influence of their reference groups when purchasing conspicuous products and services. In addition, Orús et al. (2019) found that friends tend to significantly influence consumers' decision-making, where the recommendations from their friends enhance their preferences, irrespective of existing knowledge or previous experiences.

Generation Y consumers have a greater need for their appearances to be approved by their peers, are more fashion-conscious, and are becoming increasingly interested and involved in fashion (Koksal, 2014), highlighting the importance of looking for and purchasing products that are deemed new and fashionable to these consumers (Radder et al., 2006). Consequently, consumers may purchase or consume products and services purely on the extent to which they confer status (Eastman et al., 1999).

Status consumption constitutes acquiring social prestige or status through the acquisition and consumption of products regarded as high in status by an individual consumer and the consumer's identified significant others, particularly tangible products, including beauty products (Goldsmith et al., 2010). Several roles can be fulfilled through status consumption. These include the role of association, giving individuals the tools to associate with desirable groups, followed by the role of dissociation, which occurs when consumers choose to separate themselves from undesirable individuals or groups. Lastly, the role of compensation involves compensating for psychological threats, including the reduction in ambiguity found in social and economic interactions (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). Thus, consumers, motivated by status, spend significant amounts of money on products and services that are related to fulfilling these roles (Sandhu & Paim, 2016).

The purchase behavior of consumers, particularly young female consumers, is influenced by fashion innovativeness (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). Compared to male consumers, female consumers have a higher likelihood of being innovators (Stith & Goldsmith, 1989). Owing to the critical role consumer innovators play in the life cycle of new products, many marketers and retailers have begun focusing on these consumers (Mathur, 2012) to generate as much feedback as possible, which can enhance organizations' marketing strategies (Phau & Lo, 2004). Furthermore, by developing a deeper understanding of innovative consumers, marketers will be more apt to launch strategies for new products to reduce the likelihood of products failing (McCarthy et al., 1999).

Organizations that wish to increase the rate of adoption of new products must identify consumers who are more receptive to a particular innovation. Here, marketing efforts undertaken can be focused

on these consumers in the initial stages of introducing a new product or service to a market. As such, several studies found that domain-specific innovativeness efficiently predicts behavior in specific situations (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991; Goldsmith et al., 1995). Furthermore, fashion innovativeness directly influences consumers' attitudes regarding online fashion product purchases (Park et al., 2007).

## 2. AIM AND HYPOTHESES

This study seeks to determine the direct and indirect effects of variety seeking and status consumption on South African female Generation Y consumers' attitudes toward beauty products, with innovativeness as a mediator. Based on the literature review, the paper suggests the following hypotheses:

- $H_{a1}$ : *Attitudes toward beauty products is a four-factor model composed of status consumption, variety seeking, beauty product innovativeness, and attitude.*
- $H_{a2}$ : *Status consumption has a significant positive effect on beauty product innovativeness.*
- $H_{a3}$ : *Variety seeking has a significant positive effect on beauty product innovativeness.*
- $H_{a4}$ : *Status consumption has a significant positive effect on attitude.*
- $H_{a5}$ : *Variety seeking has a significant positive effect on attitude.*
- $H_{a6}$ : *Beauty product innovativeness is a significant predictor of attitude.*
- $H_{a7}$ : *Beauty product innovativeness mediates the relationship between variety seeking and the attitudes of Generation Y consumers.*

## 3. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive research design, combining a self-administered questionnaire and a single cross-sectional sampling. The chosen target population constituted female students, who fall within the Generation Y cohort, aged between 18

and 24, registered at three of the chosen Gauteng-based public higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. Through judgment sampling, the three HEIs chosen included a traditional university, a university of technology, and a comprehensive university. Using non-probability convenience sampling, 260 full-time female Generation Y students at each campus were selected.

The self-administered survey questionnaire included a cover letter indicating the reason for the study being undertaken and a promise to keep the institutional and participant information anonymous, explaining that the data gathered would be kept confidential and only used for statistical analysis. Section A requested participants' demographic information. Section B included the scaled-response items adapted from published studies.

The variety seeking (VS) scale was adapted from Coulter et al. (2002). It included three items: "I switch among brands of beauty products just to try something new once in a while," "When I am shopping for beauty products, I am likely to buy new brands just for the fun of it," and "I get bored with buying the same brands of beauty products, and so I often try different brands."

Status consumption (SC) was measured using a scale developed by Eastman et al. (1999). It consisted of five items: "I would buy a beauty product just because it has status," "I am interested in new beauty products with status," "I would pay more for a beauty product if it had status," "The status of a beauty product is vital to me," and "A beauty product is more valuable to me if it has some status appeal."

The beauty product innovativeness (BPI) scale was adapted from Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991). It included four items: "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 have not tested it," and "I know the names of new beauty products before other people do."

Lastly, attitude (A) was measured using a scale developed by Song et al. (2014). It comprised four

items: “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.”

A six-point Likert-type scale was used to measure these scaled items (1 – strongly disagree, 6 – strongly agree). Once ethical clearance was obtained, permission for questionnaire distribution was requested from the three HEIs, where the questionnaires were then distributed to participants to complete voluntarily.

IBM’s Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27, and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) were employed to analyze the collected data. This study used various statistical methods, such as 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, mediation analysis, and descriptive statistics.

Frequencies and percentages of the sample were computed to provide a detailed sample profile. A principle component analysis was run to determine whether any item was cross-loaded. To measure the factorability of the data set, the Kaise-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of sphericity were computed.

A matrix of Pearson’s Product-Moment correlation coefficients was produced to establish the nomological validity of the dataset. The latent factors planned to be included in the model exhibiting a statistically significant relationship with one another, in the correct direction, suggest nomological validity. In addition, multicollinearity concerns were investigated using analysis of the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Tolerance values of 0.10 or less and VIF values of 10 and above indicate multicollinearity (Pallant, 2016).

To assess the reliability of the measurement model, Cronbach’s alpha values and composite reliability (CR) were computed. Values exceeding 0.70 suggest acceptable reliability (Malhotra, 2010). The

measurement model was also evaluated in terms of its convergent validity by establishing whether the computed latent factor loading estimates and average variance extracted (AVE) values met the cut-off level of 0.50. Discriminant validity was determined through the computed square root of the AVE ( $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ ) values. According to Hair et al. (2010), the square root of the AVE ( $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ ) values that exceed the correlation estimates between the relevant latent factors suggest discriminant validity. Finally, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, specifying a measurement model on AMOS.

Furthermore, the model fit of the measurement model was evaluated. Since the chi-square statistic is sensitive to large sample sizes, the paper used other fit indices to determine model fit. The fit indices are the comparative-fit index (CFI), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the normed-fit index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Values equal to or above 0.90 for CFI, GFI, NFI, and TLI, and SRMR and RMSEA values of less than 0.08 indicate an acceptable model fit (Malhotra, 2010). Path analysis used AMOS to determine the influence of variety seeking and status consumption on the attitudes of female Generation Y students. This was assessed directly and indirectly through beauty product innovativeness. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p \leq 0.01$ .

## 4. RESULTS

The study obtained 780 completed questionnaires, 610 were usable, producing a 78% response rate. The sample represented all nine provinces of South Africa, as well as all the age groups specified in the questionnaire. Furthermore, all 11 official South African languages were represented by the sample. The majority of the participants indicated being 20 years old (18.7%), followed by those of 21 years old (18.2%), followed by 19 years old (18%), and the participants who were 18 years old (16.6%). The dispersion of the participants across the nine provinces included Gauteng province (61.3%), Limpopo (12.6%), Free State (7.5%), North-West (6.1%), Mpumalanga (5.7%), Eastern Cape (3%), KwaZulu-Natal (2.5%), Western Cape (0.5%), and

**Table 1.** Sample description

Source: Own compilation.

Age	n (%)	Language	n (%)	Province of origin	n (%)	Institution	n (%)
18	101 (16.6)	Afrikaans	19 (3.1)	Eastern Cape	18 (3)	Comp	200 (32.8)
19	110 (18)	English	41 (6.7)	Free State	46 (7.5)		
20	114 (18.7)	IsiNdebele	8 (1.3)	Gauteng	374 (61.3)	Traditional	214 (35.1)
21	111 (18.2)	IsiXhosa	50 (8.2)	KwaZulu-Natal	15 (2.5)		
22	85 (13.9)	IsiZulu	116 (19)	Limpopo	77 (12.6)	UoT	196 (32.1)
23	59 (9.7)	SePedi	71 (11.6)	Mpumalanga	35 (5.7)		
24	30 (4.9)	SeSotho	145 (23.8)	Northern Cape	2 (0.3)		
		SeTswana	73 (12)	North-West	37 (6.1)		
		SiSwati	26 (4.3)	Western Cape	3 (0.5)		
		Venda	23 (3.8)	Missing	3 (0.5)		
		Tsonga	36 (5.9)				
		Other	1 (0.3)				
		Missing	1 (0.1)				

Northern Cape (0.3%); three participants did not specify. Most of the sample indicated their mother tongue as SeSotho (23.8%). The sample was quite evenly represented by the three types of HEIs within South Africa, with the participants registered at a traditional university (35.1%), followed by those registered at a comprehensive university (32.8%), and at a university of technology (32.1%). Table 1 depicts a detailed sample description.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha, skewness, and kurtosis values that were computed for all the constructs in this study.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics

Source: Own compilation.

Constructs	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attitude	4.32	1.081	-0.405	-0.244
Variety seeking	3.01	1.340	0.250	-0.908
Status consumption	2.95	1.355	0.300	-0.881
Beauty product innovativeness	2.89	1.163	0.226	-0.588

The computed mean value for attitude was the highest among all the constructs, indicating that the participants have a positive attitude toward beauty products. The computed skewness and kurtosis values do not fall outside the acceptable range of -2 and +2, demonstrating a data set that is normally distributed (Berndt et al., 2011).

Before conducting a principal component analysis, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was calculated (chi-square = 4376.907, 120 dfs,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and found to

be significant, together with a KMO value of 0.867. These results confirm that the data set is suitable for principal component analysis. The varimax rotation method was used to conduct an exploratory principal component analysis to determine whether any of the items cross-loaded. Table 3 reports on the rotated factors, as well as the communalities of each of the extracted factors.

**Table 3.** Rotated factors

Source: Own compilation.

Items	Factors				Communalities
	SC	A	BPI	VS	
Q1		0.804			.680
Q2		0.858			.772
Q3		0.851			.735
Q4		0.803			.667
Q5				0.772	.633
Q6				0.817	.722
Q7				0.793	.690
Q8	0.757				.654
Q9	0.795				.735
Q10	0.825				.734
Q11	0.825				.713
Q12	0.836				.734
Q13			0.695		.545
Q14			0.742		.631
Q15			0.689		.526
Q16			0.800		.665
Eigenvalues	5.286	2.439	1.664	1.447	
% of variance	33.040	15.243	10.400	9.045	

Based on Table 3, the exploratory principal component analysis resulted in four factors being extracted. In addition, the total variance, which these factors may explain, is equal to 67.572%. The

first factor, status consumption, contributes 33.04%; factor 2, attitude, contributes 15.24%; factor 3, beauty product innovativeness, contributes 10.40%; and factor 4, variety seeking, contributes 9.05% of the total variance explained. Based on the literature review, each item was loaded as expected. According to Pallant (2016), when all the communalities computed exceed 0.5, there is an acceptable amount of variance in each item that may be extracted by the factor solution. As such, this can be inferred by the evidence provided in Table 3.

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients for each pair of constructs were constructed to assess nomological validity. In addition, collinearity diagnostics on every construct were computed to detect multicollinearity concerns. Table 4 shows these statistics.

**Table 4.** Correlation coefficients and collinearity statistics

Source: Own compilation.

Constructs	A	SC	VS	Collinearity statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Attitude				.899	1.113
Status consumption	.226*			.767	1.303
Variety seeking	.189*	.381*		.810	1.234
Beauty product innovativeness	.286*	.394*	.336*	.772	1.296

Note: \* Significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ .

Based on the computed correlation coefficients, as outlined in Table 4, it is evident that each pair of constructs shows statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) positive relationships. This finding suggests nomological validity (Hair et al., 2010). Owing to none of the correlation coefficients exceeding the recommended 0.80 value, the computed tolerance values ranging between 0.767 and 0.899, and VIF values between 1.113 and 1.303, no obvious multicollinearity issues are evident (Field, 2009).

The measurement model was then specified as a four-factor model. Based on an over-identified model, the first factor loading on the latent factors was set at the 1.0 level; this led to the estimation of 136 distinct sample moments and 38 parameters, resulting in 98 degrees of freedom. Consequently, no problematic estimates were found for this model, such as Heywood cases or standardized load-

ing estimates above 1.0 or below 1.0 (Hair et al., 2010). After investigating the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and the composite reliability (CR) values, as well as the standardized loading estimates, the average variance extracted (AVE) values, the differences between the square root of the AVE values ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) and the correlation coefficients, it was found that the latent factors exhibit reliability and construct validity. Tables 5 and 6 present these values.

**Table 5.** Measurement model estimates

Source: Own compilation.

Latent factors	Standardized factor loadings	R <sup>2</sup>
Status consumption F1	0.749	0.561
	0.823	0.677
	0.814	0.663
	0.776	0.601
Variety seeking F2	0.799	0.638
	0.645	0.416
	0.791	0.626
Beauty product innovativeness F3	0.750	0.562
	0.634	0.402
	0.743	0.553
	0.601	0.362
Attitude F4	0.684	0.468
	0.755	0.570
	0.859	0.737
	0.797	0.634
	0.727	0.529

**Table 6.** Correlation, reliability and construct validity

Source: Own compilation.

	SC	VS	BPI	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{AVE}$
SC				0.894	0.894	0.628	0.793
VS	0.458			0.771	0.774	0.535	0.731
BPI	0.476	0.436		0.760	0.762	0.446	0.668
A	0.263	0.216	0.355	0.865	0.866	0.618	0.786

Table 6 shows the Cronbach's alpha values computed for each of the constructs exceed 0.70, with the lowest value of 0.760 for beauty product innovativeness, followed by variety seeking with a value of 0.771, and values above 0.8 for attitude (0.865) and status consumption (0.894). As such, all the constructs included in this study exhibited acceptable internal consistency and reliability (Pallant, 2016).

Furthermore, with CR values of above 0.70, the scale was deemed to possess composite reliability. Based on Malhotra (2010), all the factor loadings,

**Table 7.** Standardized regression estimates and *p*-values

Source: Own compilation.

Paths	Estimates	<i>p</i> -values	Results
Status consumption → Beauty product innovativeness	0.350	0.000	Significant
Status consumption → Attitude	0.107	0.053	Significant
Variety seeking → Beauty product innovativeness	0.276	0.000	Significant
Variety seeking → Attitude	0.043	0.459	Not significant
Beauty product innovativeness → Attitude	0.286	0.000	Significant

as well as the AVE values of status consumption, variety seeking, and attitude, exceed 0.50, suggesting convergent validity. Although one of the AVE values, namely beauty product innovativeness, was computed at 0.446, below 0.50, both the CR and Cronbach’s alpha of this construct indicate convergent validity. Based on the square root AVE values surpassing the correlation coefficients, discriminant validity can be inferred for this study (Hair et al., 2010). As such, this measurement model may be deemed reliable and valid.

Even though the measurement model produced a significant chi-square value of 280.994 with 98 degrees of freedom (df), it was decided to assess the model fit by using substitute model fit indices, as the chi-square measure can be subject to large sample sizes (Byrne, 2010). With computed model fit indices, including CFI of 0.957, GFI of 0.941, IFI of 0.958, TLI of 0.948, SRMR of 0.038, and RMSEA of 0.055, the model fit was deemed acceptable. Consequently, the specified measurement is a four-factor model that exhibits reliability, construct validity, and good model fit. As such,  $H_{a1}$  is rejected, and  $H_{o1}$  is confirmed.

In accordance with the measurement model, a structural model was developed so that path analysis could be undertaken to test the direct and indirect

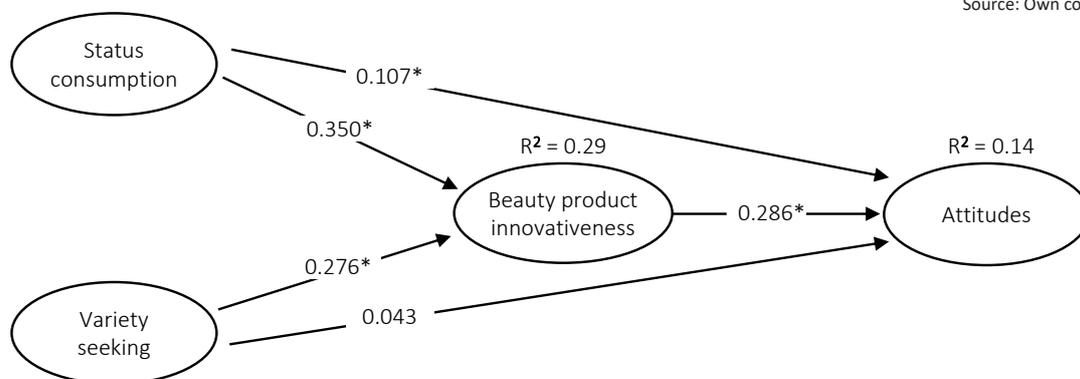
effects of variety seeking and status consumption on the attitudes of female Generation Y students toward beauty products through beauty product innovativeness. The results are summarized in Table 7.

The structural model revealed a significant chi-square value of 280.994. The other fit indices were in range, with the standardized root mean square residual (0.038) and the root mean square error of approximation (0.055) below 0.08 and the comparative fit index (0.957), goodness-of-fit index (0.941), the incremental-fit index (0.958) and the Tucker-Lewis index (0.948) above 0.90, indicating a model with the acceptable fit. Figure 1 illustrates the regression path estimates.

For beauty product innovativeness, the squared multiple correlation is 0.29, indicating that status consumption and variety seeking collectively explain 29% of the variance that can be found in the beauty product innovativeness of female Generation Y consumers. For attitude, the squared multiple correlation coefficient is 0.14, signifying that beauty product innovativeness explains 14% of the variance in attitudes toward beauty products among the female portion of Generation Y students.

According to Table 7, status consumption has a statistically significant positive influence on beau-

Source: Own compilation.



Note: \* Significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ .

**Figure 1.** Structural model

ty product innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.350, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ) and attitude ( $\beta = 0.107, p = 0.053 < 0.01$ ). Therefore,  $H_{a2}$  and  $H_{a4}$  are supported. With regards to variety seeking, it does have a statistically significant positive influence on beauty product innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.276, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ); however, the influence of variety seeking on attitude was insignificant ( $\beta = 0.043, p = 0.459 > 0.01$ ). Based on these findings,  $H_{a3}$  is supported and  $H_{a5}$  is rejected. Lastly, beauty product innovativeness is a statistically significant predictor of attitude ( $\beta = 0.286, p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). These results suggest that beauty product innovativeness serves as a mediator between variety seeking and the attitude of the Generation Y cohort regarding beauty products. Consequently,  $H_{a6}$  and  $H_{a7}$  are supported.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The status of a beauty product affects consumers' attitudes directly as well as indirectly, whereas variety seeking has an indirect effect on the attitudes these consumers toward beauty products, especially South African female Generation Y students. This is in line with previous studies that found status consumption to have a positive influence on the attitude of consumers (de Klerk, 2020; Van Schalkwyk & Bevan-Dye, 2020). Beauty product innovativeness plays an imperative role in the attitude formation of these consumers towards beauty products, particularly with innovativeness serving as a mediator between variety seeking and attitude. This is due to innovativeness being motivated by an individual seeking novelty, that includes seeking new information or products (Roehrich, 2004, p. 672). These findings might be because Generation Y consumers are trendsetters and do not hesitate to try new products as they want to stay up to date with the latest fashion trends (Runyan et al., 2013). In addition, they are

well-connected and like to have a vast array of options (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2008).

Furthermore, South African Generation Y consumers are mindful of their appearance and social recognition (Thompson, 2018), which correlates with a preference for products with some sort of status. The results of this study are in line with Ajitha and Sivakumar (2017), Goldsmith et al. (2010), Park et al. (2007), and Roll and Pfeiffer (2017). According to Ajitha and Sivakumar (2017), a significant positive relationship exists between status value and attitude. Goldsmith et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between status consumption and innovativeness. According to Roll and Pfeiffer (2017), consumers, who are more prone to seek variety, enjoy discovering new products, which is related to product innovativeness. Park et al. (2007) concluded that fashion innovativeness positively influences consumers' attitudes toward online fashion. Owing to the percentage of variance in this study, other factors may also be attributed to the formulation of female Generation Y consumers' attitudes toward beauty products.

This study has several limitations. Female Generation Y students enrolled at HEIs, other than in the Gauteng province, may be influenced by factors other than variety seeking, status consumption, and the mediating role of innovativeness. In addition, a cross-sectional research design was employed, highlighting the need for marketers, retailers, and researchers to remember that these findings provide only a snapshot in time. Consequently, a longitudinal study across all nine provinces of South Africa would provide insight into why these consumers are influenced by variety seeking and status consumption, with innovativeness as a mediating variable. Marketers, retailers, and researchers can use these findings to generate a competitive edge in the ever-increasing competitive market by engaging in a longitudinal study.

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## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate how the attitudes of Generation Y consumers regarding beauty products are influenced by variety seeking and status consumption. The findings suggest that variety seeking and status consumption affect the attitudes of female Generation Y consumers, whether directly or indirectly. Status consumption seems to have the most significant influence on beauty product innovativeness, while beauty product innovativeness has the most significant influence on attitude. Whereas variety-seeking has an indirect significant influence on attitude through beauty product innovativeness.

This study adds to the limited literature available on the female South African Generation Y cohort within the beauty product industry, assisting researchers in this field. Marketers and retailers involved in the beauty product industry should emphasize the status consumers can attain from purchasing their products as this seems to be an important factor these individuals consider. Although variety seeking has a less significant influence on these consumers' attitude towards beauty products, beauty product marketers and retailers should highlight the wide variety of existing and innovative products they offer when developing marketing strategies, especially those targeting Generation Y consumers. Placing emphasis on new products and new information will aid in influencing these consumers' attitude towards beauty products, as this will speak to their innovative tendencies which is the mediator between their variety seeking tendencies and their attitude towards beauty products. Due to their high digital proficiency, they can incorporate these suggestions into the online environment by creating online sites displaying the wide variety of products available and new information about these products to these consumers. Another strategy marketers, especially those in the beauty product industry, can utilize in their advertising campaigns are e-catalogs to display a variety of products, especially new products and new information for the consumer's perusal. Furthermore, these e-catalogs can be linked to various social media sites, making it easier for these consumers to be aware of all the products available or on offer.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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