CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS AND ASPIRATIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS AS MARKET MAVENNESS STIMULANTS FOR SELF-CARE PRODUCTS' TRIAL

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Abstract

This study aims to draw on the malleable nature of market mavenism by identifying consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness as the underlying stimulants of mavenship behaviour, albeit as they are unique to the context of self-care products. It examines the internal borderline conditions that offer a more sophisticated understanding of how marketers can encourage innate and desired attributions as pre-conditions of consumers' trial probability towards self-care products. This study utilized a self-administered survey whereby a multi-item questionnaire was nominated as the instrument of choice. Specifically, a quantitative, cross-sectional study was employed, followed by both descriptive and correlational research designs. The snowball sampling method yielded (N=475) female market mavens, representing those eliciting high mavenship behaviour. Using the regression model, the study found that consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness explained 68.2% of the variance in market mavenness. Consequently, the research findings add to the scant research in developing countries, such as South Africa, by making inferences that the standardisation of any new product can be enhanced by trial probability feasibility by deploying altruistic mavens who are knowledgeable and trusted by consumers. Based on the empirical research findings, pertinent recommendations for practice were highlighted, including research limitations and conclusions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

To remain aggressively competitive in globalized markets, marketers ought to persistently furnish customers with seamless required products and/or services (Hwang, Kim & Lee, 2021). This is because consumers demand innovative-induced changes and a high degree of services offered during the purchase procedures (Chao, Reid, Lai & Reimers, 2020). As such, concerted efforts by marketers need to expand business growth in response to customer demands, trends, and the pursuit of healthier lifestyles. This notion is supported by the seven per cent growth that was attributed in 2021, thus permitting the market of self-care products to be over US$503.6 Billion, led by the United States of America, China, and Japan, respectively (Statista, 2022). According to the report, the self-care industry ought to accumulate a growth rate of 4.76 per cent in 2026, driven by the surge and high demand for such products given online purchases.

In South Africa, the self-care product market size accounted for US$3.35 Billion in 2023 and is expected to contribute a value of 4.62 per cent by 2028 to the entire retail sales in the country (Research & Markets, 2024). Although this contribution may appear minor, it is significant that women continue to use self-care products (Gani, Roy, Rahmand, Faroquee, Gupta & Prova, 2023). These products offer intangible benefits, such as enhancing status, beauty, social interaction, psychological well-being, and embodying symbolic values. Additionally, this trend reflects a gradual consumer shift toward premium and luxury brands, which further drives growth in this sector (Ekakitie, 2024). Additionally, it is anticipated that there will be significant growth prospects of self-care consumption owing to metrosexual consumers placing more prominence on skincare products to accentuate their physical appearance (Lee & Fiore, 2024). Therefore, players in the market need to introduce new products to capture the market demand.

Owing to the continued development of product ideas, most consumers are committed to trying out new self-care products introduced in the market. Chao *et al*. (2020) highlight that trial probability of new products is presented as a tactical instrument and a predictor that encourages consumer acceptance and adoption of self-care innovations. Nevertheless, marketers need to foster product trial and thereby enhance consumer cognition and new product evaluation opportunities. Similarly, Lee and Fiore (2024) emphasize the invaluable role of influential consumers to marketers highlighting their altruistic motivations to share knowledge about the marketplace, products, and services. Put simply, information derived from trustworthy influential cohorts diminishes product uncertainty and positively influences the subsequent growth of relatively new product consumption.

1.2 Problem Statement

This research paper is in response to the academic call pointed by Abratt, Nel and Nezer (1995) for continued replication of the work started by Feick and Price (1987) within emerging countries such as South Africa since consumer behaviour and the resultant marketing challenges could be different from those experienced in developed countries. While their research is matured, so far, Abratt *et al*. (1995) remain the only scholars who have endeavoured to publish their research on the notion of market mavens within a South African context. In response to this call, this paper identifies innate stimuli (consumer innovativeness) and desired stimuli (aspirational attractiveness) as factors that augment market mavenness on self-care product trials. Most profoundly, the need for this paper is at par with the digital and biological worlds that are considerably enriched due to the changes caused by the fast-growing development of product innovations, thereby provoking a need for consumers to qualify product quality through product trial efforts.

1.3 Research objectives

The research paper aims to investigate the influence of consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness on market mavenness stimulants for self-care products.

- To ascertain the underlying determinants of market mavenness among female mavens
- To determine the predictive influence of the market maven stimuli
- To ascertain the inclinations of female market mavens towards the trial of self-care products

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical underpinnings

Hunt and Gruszczynski (2024) suggest that the growing prevalence of online interactions raises concerns about whether traditional communication models can still effectively inform purchase decisions. In true essence, the popularity of online interactions has breathed new life into old communication theories thus paving the way for the Two-step flow of information to re-emerge as a tiered model in which information flows. In this regard, the Two-step flow theory refers to the primary role of market mavens in spreading WOM communication to potential customers (Walter & Bruggemann, 2020). At the secondary level, the active and highly involved consumer segments filter and pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content to the more passive group of opinion followers. With that, consumer behavioural outcomes emanate from the two-step flow of communication and market mavenship behaviour, which can be best encapsulated within the stimulus organism response (SOR) theory proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). In light of adapting the three components of the SOR (Stimulus, Organism and Response), it is assumed that market mavenness is stimulated by psychographic factors termed the stimulus, which in turn influence

consumers' market mavenness behaviour. As such, this paper offers a nuanced and comprehensive lens to offer marketers and academic practitioners insights into the market mavens scholarship.

2.2 Market mavenness

The concept of market mavenism was devised by Feick and Price (1987) who singled them out as "individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information". The seminal work by the scholars add cumulatively to the understanding of interpersonal influence by introducing the concept of market mavenism. The role of market mavens includes initiating discussions with consumers and responding to market information requests from other consumers. Most profoundly, Jin and Ryu (2024) highlight that the influence of mavens is based not only on knowledge and expertise but also on their ability to exert interpersonal influence on other consumers through social interactions. This paper asserts that interpersonal WOM communication delivers the greatest influence on consumer behaviour, owing to its perceived credibility (Lee & Fiore, 2024). This is because market mavens draw their influential power from both knowledge and actual experience with products and product categories. Therefore, marketers can reach their intended audiences through market mavens as they fill the information gaps within the market pertaining to the marketplace and product-related information.

2.3 Borderline characteristics of market mavens

Market mavens can be viewed as fundamental agents of change because they can influence other individuals at an interpersonal level. Market maven is considered to be the most active with regard to disseminating market-related information as well as encouraging new product trial behaviour (Jin & Ryu 2024:4). Specifically, market mavens are renowned for stimulating product trial, thereby lending them to be purveyors of word-of-mouth (WOM) (Lee & Fiore, 2024). Market mavens voluntarily pledge dialogue with other consumers and respond to consumer appeals to generate and disseminate market-related information. A multitude of studies indicate that a market maven is renowned to be a female consumer based on a three-pronged decision rationale. First, the assertion made by former scholars (Feick & Price, 1987; Abratt *et al*., 1995; Williams & Slama, 1995; Gani *et al*., 2023) avert that market mavens are predominantly female. Secondly, female market mavens account for the largest share of the consumer market in the self-care industry (Gani *et al*. 2023). Thirdly, female consumers ascribe to accentuate their physical beauty by purchasing self-care products, regardless of age, income or education (Korai 2017). As such, the desired characteristics of female market mavens lend this study a discourse to direct the need for this research paper since consumer innovativeness is a valuable construct in understanding consumers' product trial behaviour.

2.4 Consumer innovativeness

Studies have demonstrated the significant role of consumer innovativeness in understanding consumers' keenness to try, adopt and thereafter accept novel products and/or services (Chao *et al*., 2020; Saeed, Sandhu, Tufail & Ali, 2023; Sestino, Amatulli & Guido, 2024). As a result, the element of time that is *try, adopt and accept,* elucidates consumers' divergence in their rate of adopting any innovation (Esfahani & Reynolds, 2021). Hence, Roger (1983:247) defined innovativeness as "the degree to which one member of society adopts unique ideas comparatively more often than the others". With that, Venkatraman and Price (1990) proposed two forms of consumer innovativeness: cognitive and sensory innovativeness. Cognitive innovativeness seeks contentment through new thought-evoking experiences, while sensory innovativeness infers seeking contentment through involvement with internal experiences. Thus, market mavens are prone to be innovative consumers who seek to convey information to others about their experiences with using novel products or services and further take product consumption risks (Hwang *et al*., 2021; Anic, Milakovic, Mihic & Corrocher, 2023; Lee & Fiore, 2024). This is due to their inherent ability to diffuse information quickly and their high media exposure.

Past research established that innate behaviour (consumer innovativeness) is positively associated with market mavenism (Goldsmith, Clark & Goldsmith, 2006). This is because, the personality of consumers is espoused through innovative behaviour, which tends to invigorate thinking from stimulus exposure (Hwang *et al*., 2021) and thereby have a significant influence on information dissemination propensity among individuals (Sestino *et al*., 2024). This notion is rooted in the search for uniqueness and contrasts with previous purchase choices. Thus, this paper presumes that consumer innovativeness is observed by consumers seeking new experiences by considering new products. Therefore, it is imperative to leverage innate stimuli as a predictor of market mavenism.

2.5 Aspirational attractiveness

The concept of attractiveness has been studied as a predictor of socio-economic success in previous research (Diener & Suh, 1997; Anderson, John, Ketlner & Kring, 2001; Bissell & Chung, 2009). Within social psychology research, attractiveness is considered capital value in the social order of relational forms (Kim & Park, 2023) thereby a more attractive individual can be rated extraverted, as they exert physically desirable traits (Batres & Shiramizu, 2023). An earlier study by Jæger (2011) linked attractiveness to various psychological characteristics over an individual's life course, including socio-economic and marital outcomes. Relatedly, the desire to be attractive has been validated as a salient attribute of materialism (Kasser, 2002), alongside financial success and social recognition. Relatedly, Gilal, Gilal and Gilal (2024) attest that attractiveness reveals important information about an individual's capabilities and competence, thus eliciting favourable reactions from others. This

therefore implies that beauty is desirable and advantageous and is an influencer of human behaviour. Nevertheless, the positive connection validated by Goodey and East (2008) has culminated in the inference that attractiveness settles in market maven behaviour and traits. This results in a direct effect between aspirational attractiveness and market mavenness. This is because mavenism heightens consumers' sensibility towards the acquisition of products that enhance personal appearance, of which self-care products are a part.

2.6 Trial probability

New products present a unique functionality that differentiates one from existing alternatives in the consumer market (Min, 2023). Such products are presumably highly innovative, thus offering a high degree of uniqueness and contrast (Chao *et al*., 2020). Specifically, innovative products create opportunities for differentiation and a competitive advantage for a marketing organisation (Min, 2023). Notably, trial probability is a calculated technique marketers use to signal the success of new products. Interestingly, one of the most effective ways to stimulate new product trials and prompt increased attention towards self-care products is to engage the services of influential consumers, which market mavens come to the fore.

Particularly, market mavens exhibit broad market expertise in gathering information about various products, creating a ripple effect in sustaining marketing messages. Market mavens demonstrate a high need for uniqueness, which leads to the inference that mavenship behaviour could potentially induce product trials among consumers. In specific terms, a strong and direct impact of market mavenness on trial probability was found in the study by Steenkamp and Gielens (2003), who surveyed the effects of several consumer and market factors on the trial probability of new consumer packaged goods in the Netherlands.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

This study adopted the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.1 to conceptualise the relationship between innate/internal stimuli (consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness), market mavenness and self-care product trial.

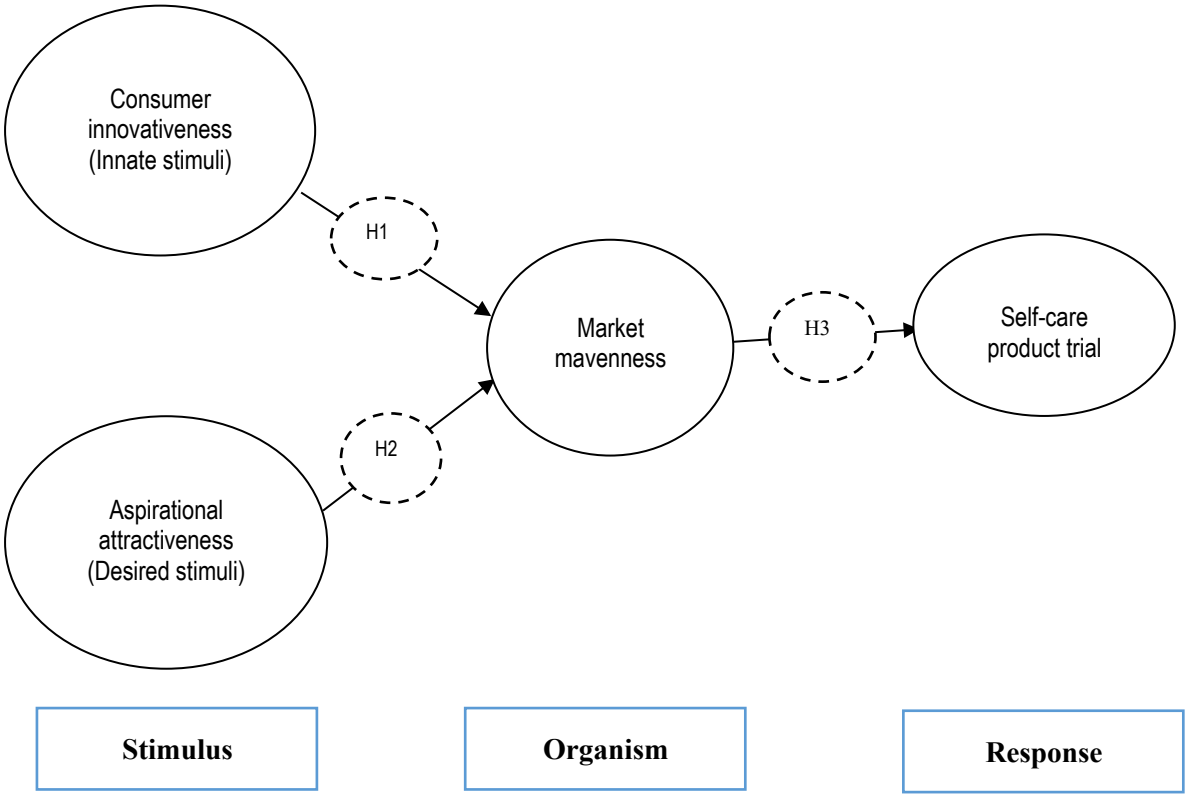

Figure 1: Conceptual model

Based on the espoused literature, the undertones of the Two-step theory of interpersonal influence, albeit as it is extrapolated within the SOR theory and the conceptual model, the following two-tailed hypotheses were formulated and tested empirically. The alternative hypotheses H1, H2 and H3, were concluded and supported by the empirical data.

$H_{0:}$ *Consumer innovativeness does not positively and significantly influence consumers' market mavenness.*

$H_{1:}$ *Consumer innovativeness positively and significantly influences consumers' market mavenness.*

$H_{0:}$ *Aspirational attractiveness does not positively and significantly influence consumers' market mavenness.*

$H_{2:}$ *Aspirational attractiveness positively and significantly influences consumers' market mavenness.*

$H_{0:}$ *Consumers' market mavenness does not positively and significantly influence self-care products' trial.*

$H_{3:}$ *Consumers' market mavenness positively and significantly influences self-care products' trial.*

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A decision was taken to collect data using a self-administered survey, whereby a multi-item questionnaire was nominated as the instrument of choice for use in this study. The positivist philosophy was followed as an underpinning philosophy because hypotheses were posited, and the study's findings are expected to be compared with the stated hypotheses. This study followed a quantitative research approach, employing a descriptive research design, especially a single-cross-sectional design. This study contained no risk for the customers involved. A non-probability snowball sampling method was employed to identify the n=500 female respondents fitting the predetermined sample criteria. The unit of analysis was market mavens who, at the time of the survey, were actively involved in disseminating information about self-care products (among other product categories), places to shop, and other market-related information. To ensure representativeness, all ethnic categories were included in the target population, consistent with the population structure of South Africa. After carefully screening the questionnaire after data collection, 475 usable questionnaires were used for final analysis, representing a 95% response rate.

Four subcategories of information about the respondents were provided in the demographic section: age, race, highest level of education and income. In addition, eight categories of trial information regarding new self-care products were provided and used as filter questions. Six measurement scale items were used to measure consumer innovativeness adopted from Kim, Fiore, Niehm and Jeong (2010). In comparison, aspirational attractiveness was measured with five scale items adopted from Goldsmith, Flynn and Clark (2012). Market mavenness and new self-care product trial were measured with six and five items, each adopted from Feick and Price (1987) and Van Trijp, Hoyer, and Inman (1996), respectively. A seven-point Likert scale anchored along 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Slightly disagree), 4 (Neither agree nor disagree), 5 (Slightly agree), 6 (Agree) and 7 (Strongly agree) was applied in the study.

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Sample profile

Regarding age categories, a total of 40.2% of respondents were between 21 and 30 years of age (n=191),24.4% (=116) of respondents were between 31 and 40 years, and 14.1% (=67) were aged between 18 and 20. Approximately, 13.5% and 7.8% were aged between 41 to 50 and over 50 years respectively (n=64 and n=37), respectively. The results further indicate that the respondents were predominantly Black Africans, representing n=377(79.4%), followed by Whites with 12,6% (n=60) of the sample. Coloured and Asian contributed a combined percentage of 8% (n=28+10). Regarding the level of education of the respondents, 36.8% (=175) had at least a Matric certificate, n=149 (31.4%) had Diploma, followed by 24.4% (n=116) with a university Degree. Whereas only 31 individuals

purported to be holders of a postgraduate qualification (masters/PhD) (6.5%) of the sample. Regarding the level of income, majority indicated that they earned less than R5 000 (n=152; 32%), followed by n=84 (17.7%) earning between R20 000 and R30 000, and n=74 (15.6%) who earned between R10 000 and R20 000. Only 13.7% of the respondents earned above R30 000. To determine the respondents fitting the predetermined criteria, new self-care products trial user behaviour questions were posed to the respondents, such as "your source of information, 'primary communication strategy for accessing new product information, 'which brand is your favourite', and 'on average, how often do you try new self-care products". Table 1 depicts descriptive statistics of the constructs that were investigated.

5.2 Descriptive statistics of the scaled constructs

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of the constructs

Scale	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Consumer innovativeness				**4.683**	**1.250**	**-0.422**	**-0.011**
C1	475	1	7	4.770	1.674	-0.297	-0.818
C2	475	1	7	4.710	1.608	-0.287	-0.768
C3	475	1	7	5.290	1.526	-0.692	-0.264
C4	475	1	7	4.470	1.596	-0.320	-0.587
C5	475	1	7	4.420	1.579	-0.247	-0.632
C6	475	1	7	4.380	1.650	-0.146	-0.809
Aspirational attractiveness				**5.136**	**1.253**	**-0.415**	**-0.089**
C7	475	1	7	5.060	1.705	-0.611	-0.593
C9	475	1	7	4.810	1.679	-0.386	-0.663
C10	475	1	7	5.160	1.597	-0.632	-0.405
C11	475	1	7	5.380	1.420	-0.745	-0.047
Market mavenness				**5.133**	**0.982**	**0.079**	**-0.874**
D1	475	1	7	5.030	1.524	-0.461	-0.556
D2	475	1	7	5.040	1.283	-0.411	-0.495
D3	475	1	7	4.770	1.344	-0.243	-0.543
D4	475	1	7	5.070	1.317	-0.387	-0.633
D5	475	1	7	5.610	1.259	-0.678	-0.065
D6	475	1	7	4.930	1.407	-0.280	-0.548
New product trial				**4.135**	**1.295**	**-0.267**	**-0.521**
E1	475	1	7	3.810	1.689	-0.020	-0.952
E2	475	1	7	3.880	1.690	-0.005	-0.962
E3	475	1	7	4.530	1.646	-0.322	-0.696
E4	475	1	7	4.240	1.569	-0.156	-0.653
E5	475	1	7	3.970	1.684	-0.123	-0.873

The results in Table 1 are gathered in terms of predictors (consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness), the mediating (market mavenness) and outcome variables, (new self-care product trial). The overall mean and standard deviation values for consumer innovativeness is ($\bar{x}$=4.683; SD ± 1.250). The result shows that the respondents strongly agreed that consumer innovativeness is prevalent as a determinant of market mavenness. This resonates with the study by Hwang *et al*. (2021:4), who found that innovative consumers display market maven tendencies. The descriptives

for aspirational attractiveness were ($\bar{x}$=5.136; SD ± .1.253), indicating that the respondents affirm that aspirational attractiveness is important in shaping their market mavenship behaviour. Gilal *et al*. (2024) corroborate these findings by suggesting that female consumers who are more attractive aspire to display market maven tendencies. The descriptive results for market mavenness showed mean and SD scores of ($\bar{x}$=5.133; SD ± .982), suggesting strongly agreed market mavenness is prevalent. Min (2023:285) supported this point by suggesting that the influence of mavens is based not only on knowledge and expertise, but also on their ability to exert interpersonal influence on other consumers through social interactions. As for new self-care product trial, the descriptive results showed ($\bar{x}$ =4.135; SD ± 1.295), indicating that respondents affirmed that new self-care product trial is critical. New products present a unique functionality that differentiates one from existing alternatives in the consumer market (Min 2023:285). Such products are presumably highly innovative, thus offering a high degree of uniqueness and contrasts (Chao *et al*., 2020).

5.3 Reliability and validity assessment

The reliability and validity of the scale is discussed below.

Table 2: Reliability results

Factor label	Scale items	N	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Average inter-item correlation	AVE
Consumer innovativeness	C1 - C6	475	0.876	0.505	0.626
Aspirational attractiveness	C7- C11	475	0.792	0.408	0.755
Market mavenness	D1 - D6	475	0.827	0.408	0.688
New self-care product trial	E1 - E5	475	0.846	0.439	0.757

- **Cronbach alpha**

Babin and Zikmund (2016:281) assert that reliability thresholds in data analysis range between zero and one. In the same vein, Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt and Wagner (2017) attest that Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.80 and 1 point to acceptable reliability. On the other hand, values between 0.70 and 0.80 provide evidence of good reliability, whereas those between 0.60 and 0.70 depict fair reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.792 and 0.876 were reported in this study as shown in Table 2, showing satisfactory psychometric properties. Consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness yielded values of 0.876 and 0.792 on Cronbach's alpha test, respectively. Following on, market mavenness and new self-care product trial reported a value of 0.827 and 0.846 respectively, along Cronbach's alpha test. Since the reported values were more than 0.70 across all the study construct, it can be ascertained that there was sufficient evidence of internal consistency reliability (Nunnally, 1978) among the scale items used in this work.

- **Inter-item correlation**

Cronbach's alpha test's notable weakness as a measure of internal consistency reliability is that the alpha coefficient is a sensitive test that can be influenced by the number of variables in the scale. In particular, the coefficients increase or decrease consistently with either an increase or decrease in the number of scale items used in a study (Pallant, 2011). For this reason, the average inter-item correlation coefficients are outlined as an additional internal consistency test since each sub-scale used in this study comprised short scales, each with less than 10 items. The reported average inter-item correlation coefficients ranged between 0.407 and 0.505 across all sub-scales, indicative of the internal consistency reliability of the scale items used in this study.

In this study, construct validity was measured through two indicators, namely convergent and discriminant validities (Babbie, 2017).

- **Convergent validity analysis results**

Convergent validity is determined using the factor loadings and the AVE. As advanced by Malhotra, Nunan and Birks (2017), adequate convergent validity is determined when factor loadings and AVE are equal to or higher than the required minimum threshold of 0.5. In this study, AVE values ranged from 0.626 to 0.757, indicating that convergent validity is acceptable.

- **Discriminant validity**

This study assessed the measurement model's discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion of correlation values. The results are presented in the form of a correlation matrix and presented below.

Table 3: Correlation analysis results

Research construct	**CI**	**AA**	**MMT**
Consumer innovativeness	1		
Aspirational attractiveness	0.609	1	
Market mavenness	0.912	0.526	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); CI= Consumer innovativeness; AA= Aspirational attractiveness; MMT= Market mavenness			

Based on the results in Table 3, all square roots of AVE exceeded the off-diagonal elements in their corresponding row and column. All values are below 1.0, so discriminant validity is established.

5.4 Regression analysis

This section reports and interprets the regression analysis results from two models. The first model compares the innate and desired stimulus (consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness) and market mavenness. The second model presents the regression results between market mavenness and new product trial.

Model 1: Factors Influencing Market Mavenness

Table 4 presents the regression model summary of the internal factors influencing market mavenness regarding new self-care products trial.

Table 4: Regression model summary (Model 1)

Independent variables: Innate and desired stimulus	**Dependent variables:** Market mavenness			**Tol**	**VIF**
	Beta (β)	***T-stat***	**Sig.** (P)		
Consumer innovativeness	.578	1.128	<.001	.168	5.959
Aspirational attractiveness	.545	1.434	<.001	.885	1.130
R=0.767[a]; R Square=0.688; Adjusted R Square=0.682; Sig. P<0.001; F=88.662; Tol= Tolerance; VIF=variance inflation factor					

Multicollinearity tests examined the tolerance value and variance inflation factor (VIF) associated with each independent variable. According to Yon-Chun and Hasan (2020:67), tolerance values should be greater than 0.1 and VIF values should not exceed 10.0. The predictor that was held constant was the internal factors (independent variables) and the dependent variable that was entered into the prediction model was market mavenness. The rating (the adjusted) of the relationship between the constructs was R^2=0. 682, indicating that both consumer innovativeness and aspirational attractiveness explained 68.2% of variance on market mavenness. The beta coefficients in Table 4 show that consumer innovativeness (β=0.578) and aspirational attractiveness (β=0.545) positively predict market mavenness. There was no significant difference in the predicting power of these two internal variables as they explained 57.8% and 54.5%, respectively.

Model 2: Market mavenness as a predictor variable of new self-care product trial

Table 5 reports the regression analysis between market mavenness and new self-care product trial.

Table 5: Regression model summary (Model 2)

Independent variable:	**Dependent variable:** New product trial			Tol	VIF
	Beta (β)	T- Statistics	Sig. (P)		
Market mavenness	0.778	19.726	<.001	1.000	1.000
R=0.778[a]; R^2 Square=0.618; Adjusted R Square=0.612; Sig. P<0.001; F=389.108; Tol=Tolerance; VIF= variance inflation factor					

The predictor and independent variable held constant was market mavenness, and the dependent variable was the new product trial. The rating (the adjusted) of the relationship between the constructs was R2 = 0.612, indicating that market mavenness explained 61.2% of the variance on the new product trial. The beta coefficient of (β=0.778) suggests a strong positive relationship between these two variables. In addition, the results suggest that for each 1-unit increase in the market mavenness variable, the new self-care product trial will increase by 0.78 units. Thus, consumers with mavenness are more likely to enhance new self-care product trial.

5.5 Hypotheses results

The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Hypotheses testing results

Suggested path	**Hypothesis**	**T statistics**	**P values**	**Path coefficients β**	**Decision**
Consumer innovativeness → Market mavenness	**H_1**	1.128	0.001	0.578	**Supported**
Aspirational attractiveness → Market mavenness	**H_2**	1.434	0.001	.545	**Supported**
Market mavenness → New selfcare product trial	**H_3**	19.726	0.001	0.778	**Supported**
Significance level <0.05; * significance level <0.01; *** significance level <0.001**					

Table 6 represents suggestions of hypotheses (H1, H2, H3). The table indicates that all the posited hypotheses are accepted. The next section discusses the results of the hypotheses test.

5.6 Discussion of Results

H_a1: Consumer innovativeness positively and significantly influences consumers' market mavenness.

The analysed results accept hypothesis H1 (β = 0.578; t = 1.128; p = 0.001). This observation means that consumer innovativeness influences market mavenness among the sampled female customers of self-care products. The results suggest that innovative consumers result in a very significant market mavenism by 57.8 percent within the sampled area in Gauteng. In support of these empirical findings, Hwang *et al*. (2021:4) assert that this is because, the personality of consumers is espoused through innovative behaviour, which tends to invigorate thinking from stimulus exposure and thereby have a significant influence on information dissemination propensity among individuals. This resonates well with the findings by Sestino *et al*. (2024), who found that innate behaviour (consumer innovativeness) is positively associated with market mavenism.

H_a2: Aspirational attractiveness positively and significantly influences consumers' market mavenness.

The results showed a positive and significant relationship between goal clarity and team effectiveness (β = 0.545; t = 1.434; p = 0.001). Therefore, H2 is accepted. The results imply that aspirational attractiveness determines market mavenness among the sampled female customers of self-care products within Gauteng province. The results, therefore, mean that an increase in aspirational attractiveness leads to an increase in market maven tendency by approximately 54.5 per cent. This outcome resonates with Gilal *et al*. (2024), who attest that attractiveness reveals important information about an individual's capabilities and competence, thus eliciting favourable reactions from others. This, therefore, implies that beauty is desirable and advantageous and is an influencer of human behaviour (Kim & Park, 2023). Nevertheless, the positive connection validated by Goodey and East (2008) has culminated in the inference that attractiveness culminates in market maven behaviour and traits.

H_a3: Consumers' market mavenness positively and significantly influences self-care products' trial.

The results support the posited H3 (β = 0.778; t = 19.726; p = 0.001). This observation means that market mavenism strongly predicts new product trials among the sampled female customers of self-care products within Gauteng. The results suggest that an increase in market maven tendency results in a very significant increase in new product trials by 77.8 per cent. Empirical findings from Min (2023:285) established that new products present a unique functionality that differentiates one from existing alternatives in the consumer market. Such products are presumably highly innovative, thus offering a high degree of uniqueness and contrast (Chao *et al*. 2020:176). Specifically, market mavens are admired of innovative products that create opportunities for not only differentiation but also a competitive advantage (Min, 2023).

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The significance of this study is dual-pronged in that it delivers salient contributions towards both theory and practice. Primarily, this study's significance lies in applying behavioural science and interpersonal influence theories within the context of consumer behaviour. Secondarily, the results of this study are nascent in tendering fertile ground for marketers by demonstrating the orientation of the female maven. In particular, this study's results demonstrate the female maven's two-fold orientation in terms of innate (consumer innovativeness) and the desired or sought-after (aspirational attractiveness) stimuli that influence market mavenship behaviour. While using new product trial as a proxy to indicate consumers' intent to purchase self-care products, this study validated that, the selected factors are responsible for activating and stimulating the trial of self-care products.

Drawing from the findings in this study, it is evident that marketers need to assemble an innovative community of market mavens. Such consumer communities can help tie ordinary consumers to share their experiences about self-care products and thereby cross-pollinate new product ideas. The consumer communities can deliver symbiotic energy and reciprocal trust since the contributions are delivered by consumers of equivalent status, with no ulterior expertise in new product development. In addition, marketers need to commit to the growing consumer trend of tailoring self-care products to the needs of their target market. This can be achieved by utilising market influencers as agents since they are symbols of not only physical appeal but also achievement beauty. Such a marketing strategy would serve to accentuate the sought-after physical appearance among consumers in return for a newly developed confidence, high self-esteem, social appraisal and acceptability through the trial of self-care products.

The potential reach and social interpersonal influence of market mavens renders them an invaluable mechanism for marketing self-care products. In this regard, marketers can tap into the contemporary market maven by observing and monitoring their digital footprint on platforms such as YouTube™, Meta™ platforms. This can help them to create a database of mavens, with which to establish a community. Additionally, marketers need to create an atmosphere that will induce consumers to try out new self-care products in the market. This study recommends that marketers need to amplify brand activations through pop-up shops since this is a transient and cost-effective strategy. Relatedly, the opportunities for new product trial should be supported using trained consultants.

7. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Conclusion

The results of this paper advance the scope that market mavens will continue to overtake formal marketing strategies, owing to the deployment of social and interpersonal influence. In this regard, the tendency towards market mavenship is a fundamental differentiator of self-care brands, among other consumer products as a result of the direct engagement with customers. In particular, the state of mavenship, especially e-mavenship is expected to draw unrivalled attention among businesses owing to the inevitable shift from traditional marketing efforts to digital platforms. Similarly, product trial will deliver important economic significance in the market environment as it poses as an undeviating indicator of the success of all new products. As such, marketers should focus on developing and highlighting the functional aspects of market mavens in disseminating information pertaining to self-care products as well as their new product trial experiences.

7.2 Limitations of the study

This research offered valuable insights into the internal factors influencing market mavenness on the ultimate trial of self-care products. Notwithstanding this, this study was susceptible to several limitations, which opened fruitful opportunities for further research. First, the study utilised a non-probability sampling technique. Snowball sampling was applied whereby the participants were selected on a referral basis only, implying that the results of this study are, to some degree, not capable of representing the entire spectrum of female consumers who have tried out new self-care products. Moreover, the study utilised a self-administered survey questionnaire to collect data. On the other hand, only female consumers residing in southern Gauteng were nominated for this research, which may be susceptible to sampling and measurement error. Resultantly, the generalisability of the empirical findings of this study is narrow in terms of projecting the results of this work to the entire universe of market mavens. Therefore, future research may attempt to conduct similar research within a pragmatist paradigm by applying mixed methodologies that permit data triangulation across both qualitative and quantitative measures. This may contribute towards delivering rich and in-depth data that explains why market mavens try out new self-care products.

7.3 Future research avenues

In view of expanding the scope of this research, it would be interesting to use a broad heterogeneous sample that incorporates a diverse demographic, comprising the male, female and metrosexual consumer cohorts. Consistently, future researchers should respond to the outcome of this research by empirically formulating different versions of variables that are antecedents and consequences of market mavenness. Furthermore, future research should examine the trichotomisation categories of market mavens (low, medium and high) within the context of South African consumers to detect the significant differences among the members in these control groups. In addition, future research may expand the geographic scope of this work across all the provinces in South Africa and assess the joint contributing factor between e-mavens, cyber mavens and virtual influencers.

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