



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING OF PURCHASING DECISION ON SKIN CARE AND COSMETIC PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

How people purchase skincare products has been powerfully affected by platforms in today's digital world Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok among them. These platforms have become outstanding direct avenues for reaching audiences, allowing brands to, more than ever, connect with the consumers they are trying to entice. Platforms allow brands to connect with their target customers through showstopping content that multitasks as eye candy and an invitation to buy. And when all that watching and listening happens through the prism of an influencer, well, those platforms explode as buying motivators. So this paper has the aim of figuring out how much all those ingredients of the platform mix influence the skincare buying decisions of a bunch who have an average age of about 23.

Influencers strongly affect people's purchasing decisions, often more than celebrities or traditional ads. Their reviews, along with personal stories and the how-to videos that make up much of their content, are highly persuasive. But when it comes to buying something, customers aren't just passively receiving that content. They're also doing a bit of their own research. They're looking at ingredients, checking prices, and pondering the trustworthiness of the influencer's recommendations. They seem to be quite savvy in their use of digital media.

Brands get plenty of opportunities to be seen and to talk to customers through social media. But these platforms create problems as well. Among them are the falsehoods that get spread around, the way some products are marketed to sound better than they are, and the not-enough rules there are about what should and shouldn't be said in ads. All of this points to a need for more honest-to-goodness marketing and more informed consumers. In sum, the dissertation argues that.

Social media marketing has a huge effect on how people make purchase decisions. The companies that come off as honest, interesting, and helpful have the best shot at winning over and keeping loyal customers.

Introduction

In recent times, social media has changed from a communication instrument into one of the mightiest marketing platforms in the digital age. For businesses such as skincare and cosmetics, where appearance, others' opinions, and trust are of the utmost importance, social media creates an unprecedented arena to not just sell products but also lobby for the kinds of influential led-to-purchase decisions that the ad men and women of yesteryear could only dream of.

With the advent of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook, the ad industry's dream has turned into a real-time nightmare for consumers. These platforms allow brands and influencers to work together like never before. And now, young adults are using these same platforms to interact and share moments in their lives.

The significant development of the skincare industry is mainly due to the rise of social media marketing. It has opened up a brand-new atmosphere where consumers not only see but also interact directly with brands. Almost every skincare brand has a social media presence, and some utilize this space better than others. The playing field is doubled for brands as they now have the opportunity to reach the very consumers they service on the user-end. The endorsements and simple usability demonstrations from influencers have been a driving force for many skincare brands.

Yet, although social media marketing creates enormous opportunities for engagement and outreach, it also brings with it some big challenges. Misinformation, hype, and over-commercialization can fool consumers and lead them to disillusionment or actually using products in ways that are unsafe or ineffective. Furthermore, the lightning-fast pace of social media trends can push consumers toward impulse buying and toward skincare routines that are simply not right for them.

This research probes the skincare sector to ascertain how much social media marketing sways the buying choices of consumers. It seeks to measure the sway exerted by an array of potent forces—like the influencers who hawk products, the brands themselves, the content within and around the posts, and, crucially, the trust that consumers place in these elements before making a purchase.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study's main goal is: To assess how social media marketing influences consumers' buying choices about skincare items.

The study's secondary objectives are:

1. To discern the societal-level effects of social media as a platform for marketing. What is its role, for instance, in shaping not just awareness, but also interest, in products like those in the skincare line? Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and even Facebook are certainly not short on users or content. A natural question to ask, then, is how these platforms are affecting their users in shaping the latter's consumer interests in a category of product like skincare.
2. To get a handle on influencer marketing in the context of this same product space. What's the role of the influencer in all of this? Might they be a more effective (or less effective) vehicle for persuading or coercing individuals to purchase products like those found in skincare lines?

LITERATURE REVIEW

How brands communicate with consumers has been dramatically changed by the meteoric rise of social media. This is especially true for industries where consumers are driven by appearance, like skincare and cosmetics. Marketers now reach younger, tech-savvy consumers with visual content, direct engagement, and influencer relationships on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. At these platforms, they open up dynamic and interactive environments where consumers explore, review, and share skincare products with one another. Social media is now the centerpiece of the skincare marketers' game plan.

There is a large amount of research that supports the notion that social media marketing is significantly influencing purchasing decisions. Dissanayake (2023) states that the accessibility and the visual platform that Instagram offers have made it a very effective medium for skincare marketing, enabling brands to not only show off their products but also to establish a more intimate connection with potential customers. Shukri and Mustaffa (2023) mention TikTok as well, which, along with Instagram, is a platform where not only product visibility but also product demonstration has become part and parcel of the marketing. This has led to a rise in impulse buying in consumers.

One of the most powerful aspects of social media marketing today is influencer marketing. Gupta and Dutt (2024) note that influencers have a singular type of marketing power, one that traditional celebrities don't possess. They can't be trusted more or less than someone else, but the trust that influencers seem to have with their followers is unique, possibly because influencers are more often relatable and within reach. The influencer's content the product review, the tutorial, the 'my skin has changed so much since I tried this!' transformation video constitutes a kind of conversation with even the viewer who just watches and doesn't comment.

Apart from influencers, another strong form of social proof is the user-generated content (UGC) of product reviews, testimonials, and before-and-after images. Indeed, UGC is the next best thing to real virtual communities when it comes to consumer interactions, and the verdicts passed in those interactable spaces often influence purchase decisions. We don't completely trust brands; instead, we trust brands that our peers endorse. And in 2023, with a downward trend in brand trust, it's our peers, our virtual communities, that we turn to for assurances.

Another key influencer of buying behavior is visual content. Nallasivam and Mahalakshmi (2023) note that when it comes to appealing to consumers, visuals are more powerful than words. This seeming supremacy of the visual over the verbal can be ascribed to several of the medium's affordances. For one, visuals can convey much more information in a shorter amount of time. Moreover, engaging visuals may hold consumers' attention better than engaging text. This is evidenced by the fact that consumers tend to remember what they see better than what they read.

In conclusion, a substantial body of literature indicates that social media marketing significantly affects the purchasing behavior of consumers in the skincare sector. According to these studies, consumers are driven to purchase decisions by trust in their favorite influencers, by content shared among their peers, and, particularly, by the visual form of content that dominates platforms like Instagram. This study focuses more narrowly on what is arguably the most important niche within this era of visual social media—the demographic of young consumers. Not only is this group the largest current segment of the skincare market (Millennials alone accounted for 13.3% of the overall global skincare market in 2015) It is also the segment that spends the largest share of its disposable income on personal care products transformation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The research design of this study is descriptive and cross-sectional in nature, aimed at analyzing the current influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions related to skincare products. It is appropriate because it allows the researcher to systematically describe the characteristics of a specific population in this case, young consumers who actively use social media and purchase skincare products. It helps in identifying patterns, frequencies, and relationships between variables such as social media engagement, influencer trust, content type, and consumer behavior. This study

adopts a quantitative approach, supported by qualitative inputs, to collect and interpret data. The quantitative aspect is conducted through a structured questionnaire, which enables the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed.

The design is arguably better characterized as cross-sectional, meaning data is gathered from respondents at a single point in time. This method is effective in capturing a snapshot of current consumer behavior and media consumption patterns without manipulating variables. It is suitable for assessing general trends and making observations about correlations, though it does not establish causality. By utilizing a mixed-method, descriptive design, the research captures both measurable data and subjective perspectives. The result is an almost all-encompassing view of how social media platforms are shaping consumer decisions.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

This study used both primary and secondary forms of data collection to explore the ways that social media marketing affects consumer purchasing decisions for skincare products.

(a)Primary Data Collection:

The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed to gather relevant information on social media usage patterns, influencer trust, preferred content types (e.g., reviews, tutorials), and purchasing behavior related to skincare products. It included a mix of closed-ended questions, Likert scale ratings, and a few open-ended questions to allow respondents to elaborate on their experiences and opinions. The survey targeted individuals between the ages of 15 and 30 who are active social media users and have made skincare purchases based on online content. This approach ensured that the sample was both relevant and reflective of the population being studied.

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select participants, with a specific aim at individuals who fit the criteria of interest. Collecting 50 valid responses over a three-week period seems sufficient to provide some meaningful analysis within the academic scope of the study.

(b)Secondary Data Collection:

Along with primary data, we collected secondary data from academic journals, industry reports, credible websites, and earlier research studies. These sources served to create a solid theoretical underpinning, helped in the development of the survey instrument, and contextualized the primary findings. Resources included peer-reviewed articles on digital marketing, theories of consumer behavior, and the impact of influencers and visual content on consumer decision-making.

The study guarantees a complete comprehension of the influence of social media marketing on the purchase behavior of skincare products. It does this by merging taken-apart survey answers and scholarly and industry texts.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity is a crucial component of any academic research, particularly when involving human participants. This study was conducted with strict adherence to ethical research standards to ensure the rights, privacy, and dignity of all participants were protected throughout the process.

Firstly, informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to their participation. The purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the use of their responses solely for academic purposes were clearly communicated at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants had the freedom to skip questions or withdraw from the survey at any point without any consequences.

The study maintained anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. No personally identifiable information such as names, contact details, or social media handles was collected. All responses were kept confidential and used exclusively for the purpose of analysis within this research project.

Additionally, the questionnaire was designed to avoid sensitive or intrusive questions, ensuring that participants were not subjected to discomfort or emotional distress. The research avoided any form of deception, and all questions were framed transparently and respectfully.

Finally, the study adhered to the academic and ethical guidelines of Amity University, ensuring that the research was carried out responsibly, respectfully, and with academic integrity.

3.EVOLUTION OF PURCHASING BEHAVIOR THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN SKIN CARE AND COSMETICS

The emergence of social media marketing has drastically altered how consumers find, assess, and buy skincare and cosmetics. By and large, they no longer turn to traditional advertising outlets like television, print, or in-store promotions to learn about new or existing beauty products. Instead, they (and we) discover, evaluate, and decide largely (68 percent) by going online.

And who can blame us? There's a wealth of content available to us there, generated mostly in real time and across an ever-expanding number of channels. B2C companies now promote themselves directly to us via our Instagram feeds, YouTube videos, and even TikTok dances.

Phase 1: Initial Adoption and Awareness (Early 2010s – Mid-2010s)

Social Media and the Rise of Influencer Marketing: For many, social media is still a relatively new frontier, one in which to learn and play. But for a select group of people, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest, not to mention the almost-certain-to-be-released platforms of the near future, are virtual venues for making a living by curating one's own brand and image, as well as those of others, for a fee.

Strategies for Marketing: Companies learned quickly that collaborations with beauty vloggers could give their products a huge boost. These partnerships were less about overall brand awareness and more about individual product sales. Vloggers were (and are) way closer to the ground. They had the uncanny ability to make or break sales.

Phase 2: Influencer Rise and Brand Engagement (Mid-2010s – Late 2010s)

The actions of consumers saw an upsurge in following beauty influencers and micro-celebrities on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. Engagement with content, such as tutorials, reviews, "Get Ready With Me" (GRWM) videos, and hauls, soared. Consumers seemed to place even more reliance than before on peer validation and social proof.

Strategies for Marketing: Influencer partnerships, PR packages, and affiliate marketing campaigns were initiated by brands. Hashtag campaigns, contests, and brand ambassador programs were used to expand reach. The tools of transparency and authenticity included live streaming and behind-the-scenes content.

Phase 3: Personalization and E-commerce Integration (2020 – 2022)

Consumer Behavior: The pandemic sped up the digital purchasing trend, pushing consumers to rely even more on social media for beauty advice, product comparisons, and the latest trends. When asking for beauty guidance or recommendations, consumers turned to friends and family and trusted Beauty Influencers. They wanted to see real, relatable content; visuals that displayed the true nature of the product; and honest opinions that were backed by evidence i.e., how the product worked in a real-life, before-and-after scenario.

Marketing strategies: Social commerce (in-app purchases), AR filters for try-ons, and targeted ads using user data became common. Brands offered personalized product recommendations based on consumer behavior and interaction history. Collaborations with niche influencers allowed for deeper audience segmentation.

Phase 4: Ethical Consciousness and Community-Building (2023 – Present, 2025)

Consumer conduct: The trend-awareness of today's consumers is matched only by their values. Today's consumers insist on products that not only look good but also make them feel virtuous. They gravitate toward items that are sustainable, inclusive, and as free from cruelty as possible. What could be a better use for your leisure time? With or without a mask, you can enjoy community, neighborhood, or family engagement and make a couple of dollars as you live out the values that seem to drive today's Consumer Behaviors with a capital C and B.

Prominent marketing strategies are ethical branding, cause-based marketing, and sustainability claims. They are prominent for a reason. Brands' priorities, today, must be inclusive. That means using not just the influencer with 10 million followers (because that's still a huge payday for any influencer), but also using the brand's real customers and a diverse set of voices and influencers to campaign inclusively. This is the use of AI hyper-targeting taken to the next level.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A) Impact of Social Media on Purchasing Decisions

Skincare and cosmetics purchase decisions are influenced by social media in ways that are not fully understood. This research study delves deeper into the influences and types of choices consumers are making based on social media content, as well as the particular areas where they are feeling more and less confident in their buying decisions. It also explores the ramifications of these decisions in terms of not just the significant amounts of money involved but also the impact on health and well-being by relying not only on social media platforms as research tools but also on influencers and everyday users as sources of relatable content.

B) Main Drivers of Engagement with Social Media Beauty Content

Three primary engines drove growth:

- **Visual and Experiential Appeal:** Users were captivated by makeup tutorials, skincare routines, and aesthetic product visuals, which resulted in higher conversion rates.
- **Influencer Credibility:** Followers placed a premium on authenticity and influencer partnerships that have stood the test of time. They prefer partners who disclose sponsorships and offer honest assessments of products.
- **Interactive and Personalized Content:** Instagram Inquiries and Q&A sessions have moved the platform beyond a space solely for brands to engage users.

Educational content not solely promotional material resonated with users.

C) Demographic Insights

Consumers 18 to 35: This age group accounted for the vast majority of social media-driven purchases in skincare and cosmetics. They not only formed a huge segment of the market but also showed the highest likelihood of enthusiasm for engaging with beauty content and following influencers. Their favorite platforms were TikTok and Instagram, where they most enjoyed discovering new beauty products.

Budget-Conscious Consumers: These middle-income shoppers were likely to make purchases only if they felt confident they were making a good value buy. And they were far from shy about asking for advice from good and relatable creators they trusted. This preference among budget-conscious buyers led to an increase in the popularity of mini product reviews, dupes, and straightforward brand comparisons in social media-driven purchasing decisions.

D) Challenges in Leveraging Social Media for Purchase Decisions

Nevertheless, participants found several hurdles to overcome:

- **Information Overload:** The overwhelming number of similar-looking products and marketing messages often left buyers dazed and confused, trying to separate out legit recommendations from ads in disguise.
- **Lack of Trust in Paid Content:** When sponsored posts aren't clearly labeled as such, they create distrust among users especially when influencers are making pretty big claims about product effectiveness.
- **Product Misrepresentation:** Bad lighting, filters, and plain ol' editing go a long way in making beauty bloggers look beautiful (and artificially so), leading to pretty mismatched expectations of what products can really do.

What's more, participants were clear about wanting more transparency in the kind of unavoidable (and unfavorably looked at) sponsored content they encounter in a day. Clearly, there and in other areas, moderation, honesty, and fact-checking are key. Far fewer participants wanted content that was even partially misleading. A clear distinction (in terms of visuals and language) between this and that would go a long way. A funny way, and a not-particularly-honest way, to make this distinction was illustrated in one participant's comment: "That's OK, if you want to live a lie. Just don't look like you're telling the truth when you're living it, if you're not."

7. CONCLUSION

The radical change wrought by social network marketing affects not just decision-making but also the very essence of consumer trust in the beauty and skincare business. Once driven largely by in-store promotions and magazine features, the beauty and skincare consumer now trusts and discovers beauty and skincare products through influencers and entirely digital communities. What has happened here? Simply put, the beauty and skincare consumer is now a netizen.

Influencer roles especially those of micro and nano influencers have become key. Their perceived authenticity, relatability, and actual usage of products lend the kind of credibility that makes consumers sit up and take notice. But these consumers your consumers, if you're a brand aren't just lying on the couch passively taking in what they're told. They're getting off the couch and engaging with influencers, asking them questions that get at the core of what makes an endorsement real.

This shift is being driven by consumers who are younger, live in urban areas, and are digital natives. They are the trust builders in today's trust-less digital environment. At the same time, an increasing number of young and digitally literate consumers are coming from these markets, which are now more inclusive and also affordable thanks to the penetration of smartphones. The increasing reach of consumers in these markets across the semi-urban and middle-income spectrum is allowing new penetrative forces to reach diverse markets.

However, there are obstacles to overcome as social media marketing moves forward. Too much commercialism, too many "in-your-face" visuals, and even deceptively beautiful visuals can help bring about a consumer trust bubble that can easily burst. To keep that bubble from bursting (and, instead, to make it a bubble of beautiful, influential brands), beauty brands and influencers need to be super-duper transparent and also personalize their communications using data that doesn't breach any privacy or ethical standards.

To conclude, social media is no longer merely a tool for promotion; it has become a decision-shaping force. For brands in the skincare and cosmetics space, succeeding in this ecosystem increasingly means mastering the balancing act of.

Authenticity and Creativity

Personalization and Inclusivity

While winning over not just consumers, but informed, empowered, and discerning ones.