


The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Indian Skincare Industry with Special Reference to the Ahmedabad (Gujarat) Region

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Abstract

Social media has become a key transformative marketing tool in the Indian skincare industry, directly influencing consumer behavior and shaping beauty routines. With the sector rapidly growing along with an increasing demand for sustainable skincare, skincare brands are adapting to the preferences of younger and tech-savvy audiences. This study further explores the impact of social media platforms on the skincare product purchasing decisions in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, while also focusing on different demographic groups. The research methodology is based on an empirical quantitative approach. The data gathered is done through electronic surveys to examine how platforms like YouTube and Instagram influence consumer interactions and purchasing behaviors. This study aims to explore the influence of various social media platforms on consumer behavior towards skincare brands and products in the Ahmedabad region of Gujarat, India. The study further seeks to understand how different demographic segments engage with skincare brands on online platforms. This study addresses the void in understanding how social media affects skincare purchases across demographic segments in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The study concludes that diverse social media platforms, especially through influencers and user-generated content, significantly impact consumer behavior. Younger consumers are more influenced by YouTube. It is seen that brands that engage through the means of personalized content hold stronger loyalty in the market.

Keywords: Skincare Industry; Social Media Marketing; Consumer Behavior; Influencer Marketing

Introduction

The skincare industry in India is rapidly evolving, with both global and local brands vying for a share of this growing market. In particular, India's metropolitan, upwardly mobile youth—predominantly of Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X—are increasingly focused on wellness and skincare, seeking new ways to express themselves while embracing a more conscious and sustainable approach to beauty. As a consequence of this change, brands now have a great chance to appeal to a global as well as socially conscious consumer base. To thrive in this cutthroat personal skincare market, brands need to develop messaging that appeals to these groups, who are not only technologically literate but also very active on digital channels.

In the current digital age, social media has evolved into a vital tool for marketing, transforming the way organizations interact with their intended audiences. Its channels, encompassing websites, applications, and diverse online services, play a pivotal role for businesses by facilitating networking, spreading information, and sharing content. These platforms have significantly enhanced the power of word-of-mouth marketing, allowing customers to interact with brands and share their

views immediately. In today's digital landscape, social media has emerged as a crucial marketing channel, changing how businesses interact with their customers. Social media, which includes websites, applications, and various digital platforms, fosters networking, exchanging information, and disseminating material, making it essential for businesses. These platforms allow customers to interact with companies and instantly share their experiences, which has greatly boosted the power of word-of-mouth marketing. Social media has consequently transformed the skincare sector by giving companies unparalleled access to a worldwide audience. The day, when customers had to rely on personal connections or local sources to find skincare items from other countries, was over. Customers can now peruse a variety of skincare products from the comfort of their homes thanks to the growth of affiliate marketing and influencer relationships.

The Indian skincare market has experienced tremendous growth, with a market size valued at \$2,478.4 million in 2017 and projected to reach \$5,033.7 million by 2027, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.5%. This expansion is driven by a diverse consumer base that includes different age groups, from Gen Z to Millennials, each with distinct preferences for skincare products. The growth is further fueled by the increasing demand for sustainable and holistic beauty routines, with consumers prioritizing skincare that supports not only physical beauty but also overall well-being. In this context, online channels, especially social media, have become an essential medium for brands to engage with potential customers. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have emerged as key tools for beauty brands, allowing them to influence consumer behavior through tutorials, product reviews, and influencer recommendations. Social media also plays a significant role in the rise of beauty influencers, who shape trends and foster a sense of community around skincare and wellness.

A significant shift is evident in consumer behavior, as people are moving away from traditional forms of media, such as TV, towards digital platforms. According to the 2020 Connected Beauty Consumer Report by Google, Kantar, and WPP, Indian skincare consumers are increasingly relying on social media, particularly YouTube tutorials, to make informed skincare purchases. The study revealed that 81% of surveyed consumers engaged with YouTube creators, with 26% making a purchase directly as a result. These findings suggest that social media, especially video content and influencer marketing, plays a pivotal role in influencing purchasing decisions in the Indian skincare market. As consumers continue to embrace the convenience of online shopping and the authenticity of digital content, skincare brands must adapt their marketing strategies to stay aligned with consumer preferences.

This research focuses specifically on the Ahmedabad region of Gujarat, where there is a unique demographic mix. Understanding the role of social media in shaping consumer behavior towards skincare products in this market is crucial. Given the rapid digitalization and the growing influence of social media in India, this study aims to examine how different demographic segments—especially Gen Z, Gen X, and Millennials—interact with social media marketing in the skincare sector. By exploring these patterns, the study aims to provide actionable insights for brands to optimize their marketing strategies, catering to the needs and preferences of the diverse consumer base in Ahmedabad. The findings will not only contribute to a deeper understanding of social media's influence on consumer behavior but will also assist skincare brands in refining their approaches to engagement, brand positioning, and product promotion in an increasingly competitive market.

Literature Review

The Role of Social Media in Modern Marketing

According to (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), social media is now a crucial component of the promotion mix, offering brands a direct way to engage with consumers. This article explains social media is

a mixture composed of technological advancement because, from a customer perspective, it authorizes companies to communicate with their customers, while from a traditional perspective, it qualifies customers to talk to each other straightforwardly. The information availability, timing, and recurrence of the discussions happening through social media between consumers are outside supervisors' immediate control. This stands in contrast with the traditionally incorporated marketing pattern worldwide by which a high level of control is present. Accordingly, directors should figure out a way to shape consumer interactions so that they align with the association's central goal and execution objectives. It, therefore, becomes of prime importance for the management of an organization to carve and control consumer interaction in a way that benefits the company's mission and goals. The paper further discusses a few methods that can be used to accomplish such managerial goals, some of which are blogs, company campaigns, and networking platforms.

Social Media Utilization in the Beauty and Skincare Industry

Social media marketing: An evaluation study in the wellness industry (Grundén and Väst, 2013). The review is a piece of the examination project "Proficient learning for quality in the wellness business". The examination strategy in this assessment study is subjective in-depth interviews completed with employees liable for the social media exercises on the concentrated companies. The interviews are examined by the content analysis method. The principal results are that the inception of the utilization of social media in organizations by and large was begun by an "enthusiastic employee" in the organizations.

Consumer Behavior and the Purchasing Intentions of Skincare Products

The Effects of Cosmetic Industry Marketing-mix Strategies on Consumers' Purchasing Behaviors, this study researched the impacts of 4P's of marketing on buying intention, consumer loyalty, and customer loyalty to analyze the influence of the marketing mix for cosmetics on consumers. For this, a poll was conducted on an aggregate of 350 clients living in Busan, Ulsan, and Gyeongnam. All clients reviewed had purchased beauty care products previously. The gathered information was inspected with the utilization of reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and frequency analysis using SPSS 18.0. The outcomes were the result of the marketing blend factors showing the fundamentally lower influence on the variables of inclination, quality, and usefulness of buying conduct, working with factors impacting the overall ease of purchase. The result of the marketing mix factors altogether left a significant impact on consumer loyalty. Results also discovered that 4P's of marketing impacted consumers' purchasing habits toward beauty care products (Seo, Sheen and Oh, 2016).

Influencer Marketing and Its Impact on Consumer Behavior

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Customers' Purchasing Intention in the Cosmetics Industry- This examination explores the effect of digital media on consumers buying expectations in the skincare and cosmetic business, with an emphasis on influencer-based marketing and web surveys. Moreover, the study expects to find out which of the two strategies, influencer-based marketing or online reviews, affects purchasing behavior to a greater extent. To investigate these impacts, the researcher has picked a quantitative technique and has led a study. The poll arrived at a sum of 126 members acquired through convenience sampling, who replied to questions regarding social media, online audits influencer marketing, as well as their buying preferences. The hypothesis was analyzed by playing out a Spearman Correlation and analysis of fluctuation on the exact information obtained from the study. The acquired outcomes show that social media influencer marketing and online

audits altogether affect the members' purchasing conduct. The discoveries likewise uncovered that web-based reviews impact the buying choice more than influencer marketing (Höfer, 2021).

The progression in innovation has made noticeable changes to the world of purchasing. The web has become a significant part of facilitating people with things that they search for. With the development of online entertainment stages and Instagram specifically, it has transformed into a significant shopping platform among adolescents. There is a constant rise in consumers purchasing products recommended by Instagram influencers, which has led several companies to prioritize establishing their social media presence and creating impactful influence through various methods. The research studies the responses of 200 female consumers from India and the key influences driving them towards creating a purchase. The research aims to investigate various influencer marketing campaigns and their impact on the general public's purchasing intentions. It also aims to study the significant impact of introducing celebrities and blogger influences (Negi and Pabalkar, 2020).

Instagram as a Major Marketing Platform for the Indian Skincare Industry

To study the influence of Indian organic beauty brands on young women via Instagram marketing. At a time when technology is inescapable, beauty brands are thriving all over online media. Instagram as a platform is flourishing, especially for the natural beauty industry. The research focuses on the influence of Instagram as an application on the skincare industry and female consumer purchase intentions. The paper aims to understand the way that Instagram content affects clients' purchasing intentions and what helps Instagram create the right target messages for its consumers. This examination is a two-step investigation of natural beauty items being an accepted occurrence peculiarity among young ladies. To further intend to comprehend if the Indian Organic skincare brands have yet to transform the Instagram world and whether Instagram marketing significantly influences young ladies to purchase Indian Organic skincare items (Ravishankar and Dhekle, 2021).

Regional Insights: Social Media and Consumer Behavior in Emerging Markets

Journal of Business and Management Studies. The Effectiveness of Social Media Influencers in the Cosmetic and Skincare Industry to the Purchase Intention of Generation Z Filipinos, 180–188- The article explores the viability of influencers on social media in the skincare industry. The analysts led a quantitative investigation utilizing Pearson Product Moment Correlation to look at further and distinguish the adequacy of social media-based influencers in the skincare business on the buying aim of Filipino shoppers. This exploration focuses on the emerging and quickly advancing beauty and skincare industry in the Philippine market. The review has featured four principal speculations. These variables incorporate Perceived Credibility, Trust, Brand Attitude, and Perceived Image as the impacting factors for Generation Z Filipino customers. Discoveries from the information accumulated have shown that every one of the hypotheses generated a critical and positive relationship towards buy expectation (Castillo, Jaramillo and Sy, 2022).

Research Methodology

The study is conducted in Ahmedabad with a sample size of 132 respondents. An empirical research design was used for the study and the primary data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire method, the sampling technique used was the convenience sampling technique. The research focuses on both quantitative data collection and analysis. Secondary sources of data have been collected to increase the overall efficacy of the study. Sources like articles, student research papers, and government documents have been referred to.

The theories which have been used for the research are as follows-

1. Social behavior theory- Psychologist Albert Bandura developed this theory that suggests that one's observation and imitation of others' behaviors form their own social behavior. This means that the way a person perceives others and their behavior patterns is how they form their behavior patterns (Social and Behavioral Theories, n.d.)
2. Diffusion of innovation theory- This theory makes sense of the speed at which customers will engage with another product or service. Subsequently, the hypothesis serves advertisers with an understanding of how patterns happen and helps organizations in surveying the probability of disappointment or accomplishment of their new introduction (Sirk, 2020)

Objectives

- To study the prominent social media platforms concerning the skincare and wellness industry in the Ahmedabad, Gujrat (India) region.
- To study different demographics and their preferences concerning their usage of social media platforms and purchase habits.

Research hypothesis

- H0.1- there is no significant impact of social media platforms and influencers on the skincare industry.
- H1- there is a significant impact of social media platforms on the skincare industry.
- H0.2- There is no significant difference in the demographics of the Ahmedabad region for uses of social media and purchase habits concerning the skincare industry.
- H2- There is a significant difference in demographics of the Ahmedabad region for uses of social media and purchase habits concerning the skincare industry.

Findings

Respondents' classification based on age

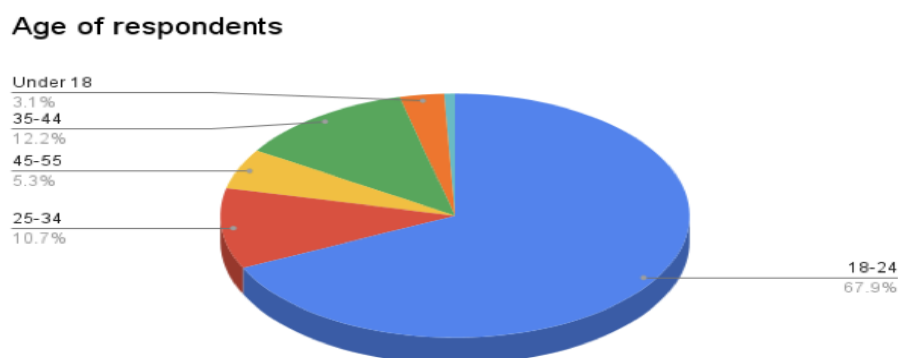


Figure 1: Age of respondents

Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

Respondents classification based on gender

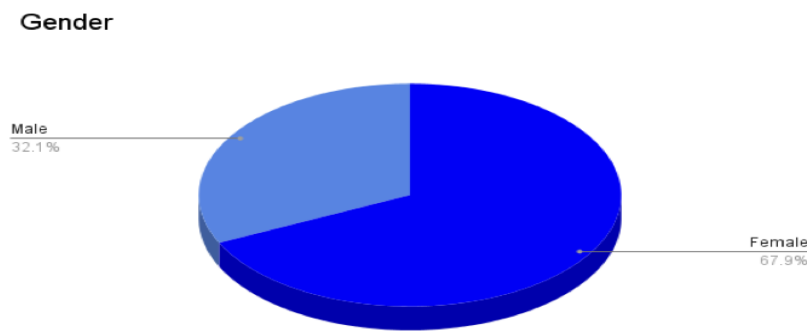


Figure 2: Gender of respondents
 Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

Survey Question- "Where do you see the most beauty product advertising"

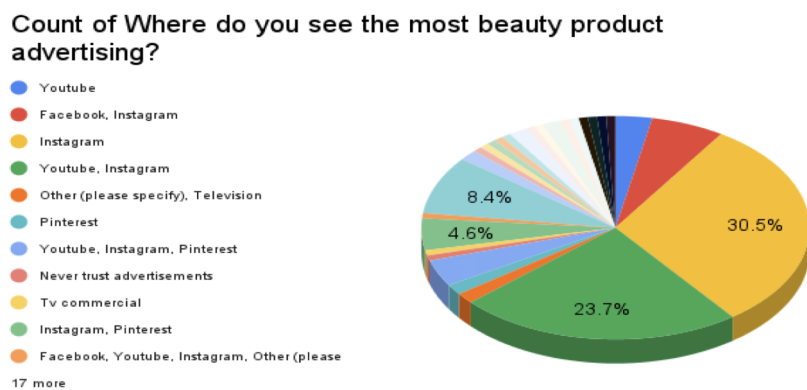


Figure 3: Response for "where do you see the most beauty advertising"
 Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

Interpretation

Out of all surveyors, 3.1% of respondents were under 18 years of age, 12.2% were aged between 35-44 years, and 5.3% were aged between 45-55 years of age. 10.7% of people were aged between 25-34 years and 67.9% of the responders were aged between 18-24 years. The highest percentage of respondents were aged between 18-24 years. Out of the population surveyed 67.9% were females. The rest 32.1% were males. Maximum surveyors were females. When asked about whether they have purchased beauty products based on social media influences, irrespective of requirement, over 68.9% of people agreed that they have purchased a product based on influences irrespective of the requirement. 31.1% of people stated that they have not purchased any beauty products based on only influence as a factor. The rest of the respondents were unsure whether they purchased a product based on influence. It can be seen that Instagram is the most demanded social media platform for advertisement engagement in the audience followed by YouTube. They together comprise 54.2% of the votes. Other options consist of a mixture of TV commercials, Pinterest, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

Survey Question- “Where do you see the most beautiful product advertising which platform do you find the most reliable for product reviews?”

Count of Which platform do you find the most reliable for product reviews?

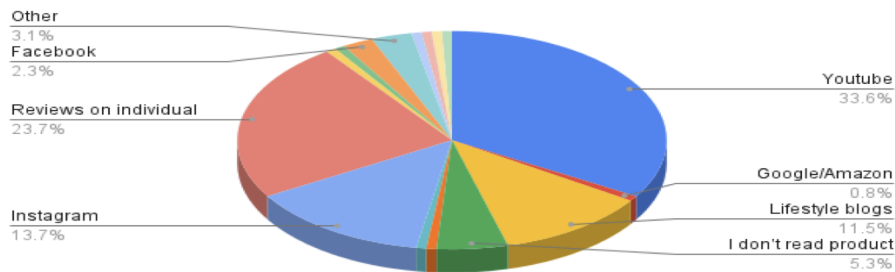


Figure 4: Response for most reliable platforms for product reviews

Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

Interpretation

When asked about reliability, 33.6% of the population found YouTube the most reliable source for reviews, followed by individual reviews on websites at 23.7% votes and Instagram at 13.7 per cent votes. 11.5% of voters found lifestyle blogs reliable, 2.3% of people found Facebook as a platform more reliable than other platforms, and 0.8% of people found Google/ Amazon to be a more reliable platform. 5.3% of people stated that they do not read product reviews before purchasing the products. About 3.1% of people opted for other platforms which included Snapchat, TikTok and Pinterest.

Table 1: Chi-Square Cross Tabulation 1

Chi Square Cross tabulation 1 - Gender * Have you ever purchased a beauty product based on social media’s influence? Either online or in-store

| Gender * Have you ever purchased a beauty product based on social media’s influence? Either online or in-store | | | | |
|---|--------|--|----|-------|
| Count | | Have you ever purchased a beauty product based on social media influences? Either in-store or online | | Total |
| | | Yes | No | |
| Gender | Female | 67 | 23 | 90 |
| | Male | 24 | 18 | 42 |
| Total | | 91 | 41 | 132 |

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 4.003 ^a | 1 | 0.045 | | |
| Continuity Correction | 3.236 | 1 | 0.072 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 3.902 | 1 | 0.048 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | 0.068 | 0.037 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.973 | 1 | 0.046 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 132 | | | | |
| a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.05. | | | | | |
| b. Computed only for a 2x2 table | | | | | |

Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

A chi-square analysis was conducted to find if gender as a demographic factor will cause any difference in purchasing behavior.

It concludes that there is a significant impact of gender over purchasing decisions of beauty products. Women are more likely to purchase products based on social media influences as compared to men. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2: Chi-Square Cross Tabulation 2

Chi-Square Cross tabulation 2- Age * Have you ever purchased a beauty product based on social media influences? Either in-store or online. Cross Tabulation

| Age * Have you ever purchased a beauty product based on social media's influence? Either online or in-store. Cross Tabulation | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|----|-------|
| Count | | Have you ever purchased a beauty product based on social media's influence? Either online or in-store | | Total |
| | | Yes | No | |
| Age | Under 18 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | 18-24 | 59 | 30 | 89 |
| | 25-34 | 12 | 2 | 14 |
| | 35-44 | 12 | 5 | 17 |
| | 44-55 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| | 55 and above | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 91 | 41 | 132 |

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|--|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 6.629 ^a | 5 | 0.250 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 8.173 | 5 | 0.147 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.237 | 1 | 0.626 |
| N of Valid Cases | 132 | | |
| a. 7 cells (58.3%) are expected to count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .31. | | | |

Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

A chi-square analysis was conducted to find if age as a demographic factor will cause any difference in purchasing behavior. It concludes that there is no significant impact of age on purchasing decisions of beauty products. Thus, null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: Cross-tabulation 3

A. Age * Which platform do you find the most reliable for product reviews? Cross Tabulation

| Age * Which platform do you find the most reliable for product reviews? Cross Tabulation | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|-----------|----------------|----------|--|------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Count | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Which platform do you find the most reliable for product reviews? | | | | | | | Total |
| | | Youtube | Instagram | Lifestyle blog | Facebook | Reviews on individual retailer's website | I don't read product reviews | Others | |
| Age | Under 18 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | 18-24 | 38 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 22 | 3 | 5 | 89 |
| | 25-34 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| | 35-44 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 17 |
| | 44-55 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| | 55 and above | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 44 | 19 | 15 | 3 | 31 | 7 | 13 | 132 |

Source: Data collected by the author, 2022

It was found that people aged between 18-24 years preferred YouTube as the most reliable platform as followed by reviews on individual retailers' websites followed by lifestyle blogs. Surveyors between 35-44 years found Instagram to be the most reliable platform for product reviews followed by reviews on individual retailers' websites. The rest of the age groups preferred almost all platforms equally when considering product reliability.

Discussion

The survey findings show that the 18-24 age group dominates, reflecting the younger generation's significant engagement with beauty products and social media platforms. They are more likely to follow influencers, participate in trends, and purchase products impulsively based on social media content. The higher female participation reflects the general trend in beauty product consumption, where women are the predominant consumers. However, the notable percentage of male respondents suggests that brands might target men more effectively than before, particularly in areas like skincare or male grooming products. The high percentage of respondents who have made purchases based on social media influence reflects the power of digital marketing, influencers, and trends. Social media platforms, especially Instagram, have transformed beauty shopping habits, encouraging impulsive buys, trend-following, and the discovery of new products. Instagram's visual-centric platform makes it ideal for showcasing beauty products, as users can see the products in action, check out influencer reviews, and engage with brand content. YouTube also benefits from longer video content, where influencers can provide in-depth reviews or tutorials, helping drive purchase decisions.

Traditional media like TV and Facebook have less engagement, especially with younger audiences who gravitate towards social platforms for product discovery. YouTube is chosen as the most trusted platform (33.6%) for product reviews, likely due to its in-depth, visual content and the credibility of influencers offering detailed demonstrations. Individual reviews on websites follow closely (23.7%) as they provide authentic feedback from verified buyers. Instagram (13.7%) ranks lower in reliability because of its promotional nature, while lifestyle blogs (11.5%) offer comprehensive but less widely followed insights. Platforms like Facebook (2.3%) and Google/Amazon (0.8%) are seen as less reliable due to potential bias and manipulated reviews. Additionally, 5.3% of respondents don't read reviews, and 3.1% rely on newer platforms like TikTok and Pinterest, which are still growing in trustworthiness.

The chi-square analysis (table 2.1 chi-square cross-tabulation 1) reveals a significant impact of gender on beauty product purchasing decisions, with women being more likely to purchase products based on social media influences compared to men. This result is consistent with the broader trends observed in the beauty industry, where women are the primary consumers of beauty products and are more engaged with social media content, particularly influencer marketing. Social media platforms, especially Instagram and YouTube, are heavily utilized for beauty-related advertisements, and women, particularly in younger age groups, are more likely to follow beauty influencers and engage with content related to skincare, makeup, and fashion. On the other hand, men tend to be less influenced by social media when it comes to beauty product purchases, often due to less engagement with beauty influencers and social media trends. As a result, the null hypothesis (that gender does not affect purchasing decisions) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (that gender significantly impacts purchasing decisions) is accepted, reflecting the stronger role of social media influence on female consumers in the beauty market.

As seen through the findings for Table 2.3 Cross Tabulation 3, the preference of social media platforms through the influence of reviews differs by age group. For the younger audience aged between 18-24, YouTube stands out to be the most trusted platform, likely because of its video content and influencers' detailed reviews. The next most preferred platforms are individual retailer websites and lifestyle blogs. In contrast, older audiences between the age group of 35-44 preferred Instagram for product reviews reflecting a higher engagement with visual and influencer-driven content. Other age groups (under 18 and 45-55) reflect a balanced preference across platforms while preferring a more traditional approach to product reviews. Overall young adults favor YouTube and Instagram while the older audience groups rely on a mix of platforms.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior within the Indian skincare industry with a particular focus on the Ahmedabad region of Gujarat. The findings provide insight into the platforms that influence consumer purchasing decisions in the skincare sector, which include Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. The most trusted platform for product reviews was identified as YouTube, followed closely by individual retailer's websites and Instagram. More than 37% of respondents agreed that being influenced by social media advertisements often leads to impulsive purchases irrespective of the uncertainty about the quality of the product. This finding highlights the growing power of digital marketing in the skincare industry.

In terms of demographics, it is revealed that women are more likely to be influenced by social media for purchases, particularly beauty-related. On the other hand, men typically make need-based and intentional purchases. The audience's age group did not have a significant impact on purchasing behaviors, however, one commonality is that the audience members between the age group of 18-44 years are more likely to trust YouTube and Instagram for product reviews.

Taking everything into account, the research underscores the intense influence of social media channels on the skincare industry in Gujarat. The findings suggest that brands must strategically make use of platforms to enhance their marketing effectiveness.

Recommendations

To effectively engage with consumers in the Ahmedabad region, skincare brands should focus on influencer collaborations on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram as these are the most attractive and engaging platforms for audiences between 18-44 years. Tailoring content and campaigns to targeted demographics and genders is crucial, as it can be seen that women respond more to emotionally influencing content while men prefer a practical advertisement or review. Influencer partnerships will further support in building trust and credibility in the viewers. Encouraging user-generated content can further boost brand authenticity, real perspective, and views, along with consumer engagement as the content feels more realistic and builds audience connections. Exploring newly emerging platforms such as TikTok and Pinterest will assist brands to be trendy. Lastly, maintaining a transparent approach by providing a list of ingredients, along with its sources will foster long-term consumer trust and loyalty while also ensuring a stronger and sustainable consumer relationship management.

Future Research Directions

For further research, it is recommended that the studies should expand their scope geographically to include multi-cultural regions that could give an insight into the global audience perspectives. Studies could also focus on the differing consumer behaviors on different social media platforms. A deep examination of various creative content types could provide extensive details about what influences and resonates with consumers.

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