

The Nexus of Social Media Advertising and Its Impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour for Skincare Products

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of social media advertising on consumer purchasing behavior, with a focus on skincare products. In recent years, social media platforms have become pivotal in shaping consumer perceptions and influencing purchasing decisions, particularly within the beauty and skincare industry. The research examines how different forms of social media advertising, including influencer endorsements, sponsored posts, and user-generated content, affect the purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and trust of consumers toward skincare brands. The study utilises a quantitative survey approach to gauge consumer behaviour to gain deeper insights into motivations behind skincare product purchases. Results indicate that social media advertising significantly impacts consumer decision-making, with influencer marketing being particularly influential in shaping brand trust and increasing purchase intentions. Moreover, consumers demonstrate a higher likelihood of purchasing skincare products when they perceive the advertising as authentic and relatable. This research also highlights the role of consumer engagement, reviews, and online communities in reinforcing buying decisions. The findings contribute to understanding the evolving relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior in the skincare sector by offering valuable insights for brands seeking to optimize their social media marketing efforts. The study provides practical recommendations for skincare brands to leverage social media advertising to effectively influence consumer buying behavior.

Keywords: Social Media Advertising, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Skincare Products, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intentions.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has revolutionised marketing strategies and profoundly influenced consumer behaviour, particularly in the skincare industry. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become pivotal channels where consumers discover, evaluate, and decide on skincare products. The interactive nature of these platforms facilitates direct engagement between brands and consumers, fostering a dynamic environment for marketing activities. Social media advertising leverages various formats, including influencer endorsements, sponsored content, and user-generated reviews, to shape consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Influencers, individuals with substantial followings, play a crucial role in this ecosystem. Their recommendations can significantly impact consumer attitudes toward skincare products, often serving as a bridge between brands and potential customers. A study by Jin and Phua (2014) highlights that influencers' personalized content effectively shapes consumers' preferences and purchase decisions.

The credibility and authenticity perceived in influencer endorsements are critical in building consumer trust. Consumers tend to trust influencers who provide honest reviews and relatable content, which can lead to increased purchase intentions.

However, the effectiveness of such endorsements depends on the perceived authenticity and expertise of the influencer. While social media endorsements influence some consumers, a significant portion remains sceptical, underscoring the importance of genuine and transparent marketing practices, according to research. Moreover, social media platforms facilitate electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), where consumers share their experiences and opinions about skincare products. This user-generated content serves as a valuable source of information for potential buyers, influencing their purchasing decisions. The interactive nature of social media allows consumers to engage with both brands and fellow consumers, creating a community-driven approach to marketing. Studies have shown that E-WOM significantly impacts consumer buying behavior, with entertainment and engagement being strong influencing factors.

However, the influence of social media advertising is not uniform across all demographics. Factors such as age, gender, and cultural background play a role in how consumers perceive and are influenced by social media marketing. For instance, younger consumers are generally more receptive to social media advertising, while older demographics may rely more on traditional forms of marketing. Additionally, cultural differences can affect the effectiveness of social media campaigns, necessitating tailored marketing strategies for diverse audiences.

Social media advertising has become an integral component of marketing strategies in the skincare industry, significantly impacting consumers' buying behavior. The interactive and engaging nature of social media platforms allows for personalized marketing approaches, which foster consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on various factors, including the authenticity of endorsements and demographic differences among consumers. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for brands aiming to leverage social media advertising effectively in the competitive skincare market.

RESEARCH GAP

While existing studies have extensively examined the influence of social media advertising on consumer behavior, there remains a significant gap in understanding its specific impact on the skincare industry, particularly in the context of consumer perceptions, engagement, and purchase intentions. Much of the existing research focuses on broad consumer goods or fashion, leaving the skincare sector underexplored, especially in regions where digital engagement is rapidly increasing. Furthermore, while studies have addressed the role of influencers and user-generated content in shaping consumer behavior, few have investigated the interplay between different types of social media advertising—such as influencer marketing, sponsored posts, and UGC—and their collective impact on brand trust and purchase intentions. This study aims to fill these gaps by specifically focusing on the skincare industry and region-specific consumer behaviour.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of social media advertising on consumer perceptions towards skincare brands.
- To analyse the role of consumer engagement on consumer perception of skincare products among consumers.
- To explore the relationship between consumers perception on consumer purchase intention of skincare products.

Hypothesis of the Study

H₁: Social media advertising significantly influences consumer perceptions of skincare brands

H₂: Consumer engagement has a significant impact on the consumer perception of skincare products among consumers

H₃: There is a significant relationship between consumer perception and purchase intention

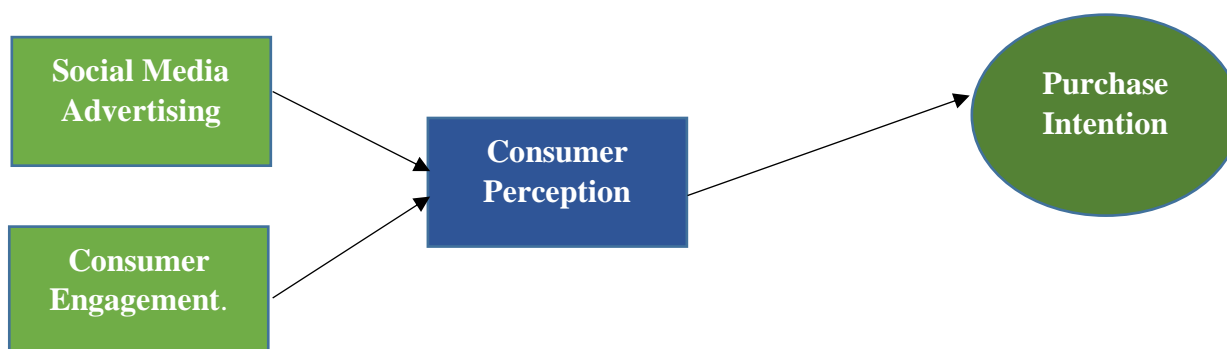


Fig. 1 Conceptual Model of the Research

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The impact of social media advertising on consumer buying behavior has been extensively studied, particularly within the beauty and skincare industries. Social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, have emerged as powerful tools for marketers to influence consumer behavior by providing direct access to targeted audiences. This literature review explores the significant role of social media advertising in shaping consumer perceptions, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty for skincare products. One of the key drivers of social media's influence on consumer behavior is social media influencers. These influencers, often individuals with large followings on platforms like Instagram or YouTube, have been found to significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011).

H1: Social media advertising significantly influences consumer perceptions of skincare brands

Influencers' ability to generate trust and engage with their followers creates a sense of authenticity, which, in turn, enhances their persuasive power. Influencer marketing in the skincare industry has been particularly effective, as consumers often turn to influencers for skincare advice and product recommendations (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Research by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) supports this, revealing that consumers trust influencer endorsements more than traditional advertising, and that such endorsements often lead to increased purchase intentions. In addition to influencer marketing, user-generated content (UGC) plays a crucial role in influencing buying behavior. Social media platforms encourage consumers to share their experiences with skincare products, and these reviews or testimonials from real users often have a higher perceived credibility than corporate advertisements (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). According to a study by Kim and Ko (2012), UGC, particularly positive reviews, increases consumer engagement and brand loyalty, which eventually leads to higher conversion rates and purchase intentions. Moreover, the interactive nature of social media allows for real-time feedback and direct engagement with brands, further enhancing consumer trust and decision-making (Luo, Zhang, & Duan, 2013).

The impact of social media advertising is also shaped by the perceived authenticity of the content. According to research by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016), ads that are perceived as authentic are more likely to generate positive responses from consumers. Authenticity in social media advertising is often associated with transparency, honesty, and a brand's alignment with consumers' values. This is particularly significant in the skincare industry, where consumers are highly sensitive to the ingredients and ethical practices of brands (Matthes, Wonneberger, & Scherr, 2014). Afsar Ali, Rauf, T., Ahmad, N., & Naveeda. (2024, Brands that maintain a transparent and authentic presence on social media are more likely to build consumer trust and increase purchase intentions (Kang & Kim, 2017).

H2: Consumer engagement has a significant impact on the consumer perception of skincare products among consumers

Demographics and psychographics significantly influence how social media advertising affects purchase decisions. Studies suggest that younger consumers, especially millennials and Gen Z, are more likely to be influenced by social media ads and influencers (Smith, 2016). This is in line with findings by Nielsen (2015); Ali, A., Rauf, T., Mir, A. A., & Ahmed, N. (2024), who reported that millennials are more likely to trust social media recommendations than traditional forms of advertising. Additionally, psychographic factors, such as lifestyle and personal interests, also play a role in determining how consumers respond to social media marketing efforts (Cohen & Erez, 2015).

H₃: There is a significant relationship between consumer perception and purchase intention

Social media advertising has a profound impact on consumer buying behavior in the skincare industry. Influencer marketing, user-generated content, authenticity, and demographic factors all contribute to shaping consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions. As the role of social media continues to grow, skincare brands must develop effective strategies to leverage these platforms for maximum consumer engagement and increased sales.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds significant value in understanding the profound influence of social media advertising on consumer buying behavior, particularly in the context of skincare products. As social media platforms continue to dominate the digital landscape, brands in the skincare industry must adapt their marketing strategies to effectively reach and engage with their target audience. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how social media advertising, especially through influencers and user-generated content, impacts consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions. By analysing the role of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in shaping consumer behavior, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer decisions. The research underscores the importance of authenticity and transparency in social media campaigns, which are critical in building consumer trust and enhancing brand loyalty.

This study provides a practical framework for skincare brands to optimise their social media marketing efforts. By identifying key factors such as influencer credibility, the perceived authenticity of advertisements, and the role of online reviews, the research offers actionable recommendations for brands to improve consumer engagement and increase sales. The study's insights will be beneficial not only for marketers in the skincare industry but also for academics seeking to explore the evolving dynamics of social media marketing in other sectors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design, data collection methods, sample selection, and analysis techniques used in the study of social media advertising's impact on consumer buying behavior for skincare products. This approach guarantees a thorough comprehension of how various social media marketing strategies impact consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions.

Research Design

A quantitative research design was employed to examine the relationship between social media advertising and consumer buying behavior. This approach allows for the collection of numerical data and its subsequent analysis to identify patterns, correlations, and causal relationships. A cross-sectional survey design was used, as it enables the researcher to gather data from participants at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of current behaviours and attitudes of J&K consumers.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of young adults (ages 18-35) who are active users of social media platforms and regularly purchase skincare products in J&K. This demographic is particularly relevant due to its high engagement with digital marketing and social media influencers.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants to ensure that the sample was representative of the general population of social media users in terms of age, gender, and socio-economic status. A sample size of 321 respondents was determined to be adequate for statistical analysis, providing sufficient power to detect meaningful differences and correlations.

Data Collection Method

Primary data was collected through a structured online questionnaire, which was distributed via email and social media platforms. The survey included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions in response to social media advertising campaigns. Questions focused on various aspects of social media marketing, including influencer marketing, sponsored posts, and user-generated content.

The survey instrument was pre-tested with a small sample ($n = 30$) to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity of the questions. Adjustments were made based on the feedback from the pilot test.

Variables and Measurement

The study's key variables include:

- **Independent Variables:**
 - Social Media Advertising (influencer marketing, sponsored posts, user-generated content)
 - Consumer Engagement (likes, shares, comments, reviews)
- **Mediating Variable:**
 - Consumer Perceptions & Trust (brand trust, authenticity, perceived credibility)
- **Dependent Variable:**
 - Purchase Intention (likelihood of buying skincare products, purchase behavior)

All variables were operationalized using existing scales from prior research (e.g., scales for measuring brand trust and purchase intentions) to ensure the reliability and validity of the measures.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the online surveys were coded and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences & AMOS). To test the proposed hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was used to assess the direct and indirect effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, with consumer perceptions and trust serving as mediating factors. Path analysis was performed to examine the causal relationships between variables in the conceptual model, allowing for the assessment of the direct and indirect impacts of social media advertising strategies on purchase intentions.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed during the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured, and all responses were stored securely. No personal identifiers were collected, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), CFA is first undertaken on the measurement model with (AMOS, 23) prior to the examination of hypotheses. The measurement model has been observed to be satisfactory and valid (table, 3) based on relevant fit indices (Chi-square = 468.112, DF = 241, CMIN/DF = 1.973, GFI = 0.910, TLI =

0.937, CFI = 0.979, SRMR = 0.27, and RMSEA = 0.077), which were assessed in accordance with the suggestions of previous researchers (Byrne et al., 1989; Kline, 2005; Hair et al., 2010).

Next, the composite reliability and average variance extracted (table, 1) were both exceeding the specified cut-off figures of 0.70 and 0.50, (Hair et al., 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981), whereas overall factor loadings (table, 1) are indeed greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010), Additionally, the AVE square root values for all components surpassed correlations across constructs (table, 2), indicating clear evidence of discriminant validity. (Fornell, & Larcker, 1981). Given these results it becomes apparent that the measuring model had sufficient levels of reliability as well as validity. Additionally “Harman’s single factor test” was performed using SPSS to exclude the potential of “common method bias” (variation with in data mostly ascribed to a single variable). The overall variance accounted by the single factor remained 31%, which was much lower than the acceptable threshold of < 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Table 1. Measurement model results

Constructs/Items	Item loadings	CR	AVE
Social Media Advertising			0.81
SMA1	.887		
SMA2	.644		
SMA3	.611		
SMA4	.712		
SMA5	.929		
Consumer Engagement			0.82
CE1	.700		
CE2	.717		
CE3	.829		
CE4	.741		
OCE5	.529		
Consumer Perception			0.94
CP1	.717		
CP2	.730		
CP3	.829		
CP4	.928		
CP5	.954		
CP6	.642		
Purchase Intention			0.89
PI1	.932		
PI2	.520		
PI3	.716		
PI4	.829		
PI5	.543		

Table 2. Discriminant validity

Constructs	SMA	CE	CP	PI
SMA	0.783			
CE	0.487***	0.790		
CP	0.192***	0.221***	0.821	
PI	0.283***	0.392***	0.163**	0.755

Structural model

The results of SEM (table, 3) suggested a good overall model fit: ($\chi^2= 567.679$, $DF = 231$, $CMIN/DF = 2.292$, $GFI = 0.990$, $TLI = 0.912$, $CFI = 0.957$, $SRMR = 0.55$ and $RMSEA = 0.065$), according to (Hair et al., 2018).

Table 3. Model fit metrics (measurement and structural model)

Fit indices	X ²	df	X ² /df	p	GFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Measurement Model	477.102	231	1.993	0.000	0.920	0.999	0.937	0.047	0.079
Structural model	557.679	256	2.282	0.000	0.980	0.947	0.922	0.055	0.068

Note: “CFI: Comparative fit index; TLI: Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA: Root mean square error of approximation; GFI: Goodness of Fit-Index; SRMR: standardised root mean square residual”.

All the hypothesised relationships were supported, as presented in (table, 4) below.

Table 4. Hypothesis results

(H)	Hypothesized Relation	Standardised Estimate	S.E	C.R	P	Results
H1	SMA→CP	.169	.045	3.733	***	Supported
H2	CE→CP	.246	.050	5.120	***	Supported
H3	CP→PI	.234	.051	4.232	***	Supported

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study highlights the significant role that social media advertising plays in shaping consumer buying behavior, particularly within the skincare industry. Through influencer marketing, sponsored posts, and user-generated content (UGC), social media has become a powerful tool for brands to engage consumers, build trust, and influence purchasing decisions. The findings confirm that consumer perceptions, shaped by authenticity, transparency, and trust, are key drivers of purchase intentions. Additionally, consumer engagement on social media, including likes, shares, and reviews, directly enhances brand loyalty and contributes to higher purchase likelihoods.

One of the hypothesis of this study is H1 Social media advertising significantly influences consumer perceptions of skincare brands. The AMOS result shows (H1 P-value = *** CR = 3.733 Supported). Bianchi and Andrews (2021) argue that social media advertising has a significant impact on consumers' attitudes and engagement toward skincare brands by offering an interactive and engaging platform for brand communication. Shao and Li (2021) highlight that emotional engagement with social media advertising is a crucial factor in shaping consumer perceptions. Social media ads that engage consumers emotionally create positive associations with the skincare brand, improving consumer perceptions of product quality, trust, and brand credibility. Second hypothesis of the study is H2 consumer engagement has a significant impact on the consumer perception of skincare products among consumers. The AMOS result shows are (H2 P value *** CR= 5.120) is also supported. The previous study like Chae et al. (2021) found that consumer engagement with social media content—such as liking, commenting, and sharing—positively influences consumer perceptions of skincare brands. Similarly, Hypothesis (H3 P value *** and CR = 4.232), there is a significant relationship between consumer perception and purchase intention,

as per the result of the AMOS it support this hypothesis. The support for this result also found in the previous study like Huang and Benyoucef (2020) studied how online consumer reviews impact perceptions of a product and found a significant positive relationship between consumer perception and purchase intention. This study also emphasizes the importance of demographic factors in understanding consumer responses to social media marketing, especially among younger audiences who are more likely to be influenced by digital content. Overall, the research offers valuable insights for skincare brands looking to leverage social media platforms to optimize their marketing strategies, improve consumer engagement, and ultimately boost sales and brand loyalty.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the study provides valuable insights into the role of social media advertising in consumer behavior, it has limitations. The sample is limited to young adults who are active on social media, which may not fully represent older demographics. Further, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to draw causal inferences over time.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. All research was conducted in an unbiased and transparent manner, with no financial or personal relationships influencing the outcomes or interpretations of the research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Professor Mushtaq Ahmad Siddiqi, Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir, for his invaluable guidance, support, and insightful contributions throughout this study.

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