

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SKINCARE TRENDS: AN ASSESSMENT OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR, TRUST AND PRODUCT ADOPTION AMONG INDIVIDUALS- A CROSS -SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid growth of social media has transformed how individuals obtain skincare information and make decisions about skincare products and practices. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Snapchat provide instant access to product reviews, educational content, influencer recommendations, and personal experiences. While these platforms have increased skincare awareness and encouraged self-care, they have also contributed to misinformation, unrealistic beauty standards, and promotional content. Understanding their influence on consumer behaviour is essential for promoting evidence-based skincare practices and responsible digital health communication.

Objective: The present study aimed to assess the influence of social media on skincare trends by evaluating consumer behaviour, trust in information sources, information verification practices, and product adoption among individuals aged 17–50 years.

Materials and Methods: A community-based quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted among 226 participants aged 17–50 years. Data were collected over ten days using a structured Google Forms questionnaire distributed through social media platforms. The questionnaire assessed demographic characteristics, social media usage, exposure to skincare content, purchasing behaviour, trust in information sources, product adoption, and information verification practices. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were expressed as frequencies and percentages, while the Chi-square test determined associations between demographic variables and study outcomes. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: Among 226 respondents, most were aged 18–25 years (57.96%), female (71.68%), and students (53.98%). Instagram was the leading platform for skincare information (59.73%), followed by YouTube (21.24%) and Facebook (17.26%). Nearly two-thirds (63.72%) actively searched for skincare advice on social media, while 50.88% strongly agreed that social media increased their interest in skincare. Overall, 84.07% reported purchasing skincare products after exposure to social media content. Participants trusted dermatologists (79.65%) and scientific websites (72.12%) more than advertisements or influencers, and 57.96% verified skincare information before following recommendations. Chi-square analysis showed significant associations between age and skincare interest, purchasing behaviour, product adoption, information verification, satisfaction, and trust in selected information sources, whereas gender showed fewer significant associations.

Conclusion: Social media has become a major influence on skincare awareness, purchasing decisions, and product adoption. Despite the popularity of influencer-generated content, participants showed greater trust in professional and evidence-based sources. The findings highlight the need to improve digital health literacy, promote evidence-based skincare communication, and encourage collaboration among healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and digital content creators to reduce misinformation and support informed consumer decision-making.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Skincare, Consumer Behaviour, Product Adoption, Health Communication, Digital Health, Dermatology, Social Media Influencers, Information Verification, Consumer Trust.

INTRODUCTION

The widespread adoption of social media has fundamentally transformed the manner in which individuals access health-related information, communicate with healthcare communities, and make decisions regarding personal health and wellness. Over the past decade, digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) have evolved beyond social networking applications into influential sources of education, product marketing, and consumer engagement.^[1-4] Among the many industries affected by this digital transformation, the skincare sector has experienced remarkable growth, driven largely by user-generated content, influencer marketing, online product reviews, and targeted advertising. Consumers increasingly rely on social media platforms to discover skincare routines, compare products, learn about dermatological conditions, and seek recommendations before making purchasing decisions.^[5,6]

Healthy skin is widely recognized as an essential component of physical health, psychological well-being, and overall quality of life. As the largest organ of the human body, the skin serves as the primary protective barrier against environmental pollutants, pathogenic microorganisms, ultraviolet radiation, and physical injury. Beyond its physiological functions, healthy skin contributes significantly to self-esteem, body image, confidence, and social interactions.^[7,8] Consequently, increasing awareness regarding skincare has encouraged individuals to seek information about preventive skincare practices, cosmetic products, and dermatological treatments. Traditionally, such information was obtained through dermatologists, healthcare professionals, scientific literature, and public health education campaigns. However, the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has substantially altered these information-seeking behaviours, with social media emerging as one of the most frequently used sources of skincare knowledge.^[2,5]

Social media platforms provide immediate access to a wide variety of skincare-related content, including educational videos, expert discussions, product demonstrations, consumer testimonials, before-and-after transformations, ingredient explanations, and live interactions with content creators. This accessibility has increased public awareness regarding skincare routines, sunscreen application, acne management, anti-ageing therapies, and evidence-based preventive dermatological care.^[6,9] Furthermore, interactive features such as comments, likes, shares, and direct messaging promote engagement among consumers, influencers, healthcare professionals, and cosmetic brands, thereby creating dynamic online communities dedicated to skincare education and product experiences.

Parallel to the expansion of social media usage, the global skincare market has experienced substantial growth. Cosmetic companies increasingly employ digital marketing strategies through collaborations with influencers, beauty bloggers, dermatologists, and celebrities to promote skincare products across multiple social media platforms. Influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most effective promotional strategies because consumers often perceive influencers as relatable, authentic, and trustworthy sources of product information. Their recommendations significantly influence consumer awareness, purchasing intentions, brand preferences, and willingness to experiment with newly introduced skincare products.^[10-12] Consequently, social media has become an influential determinant of consumer behaviour, shaping not only product awareness but also attitudes, beliefs, and long-term skincare practices.

Despite these advantages, the increasing dependence on social media for skincare information has raised several public health concerns. Unlike information disseminated through peer-reviewed scientific literature or licensed healthcare professionals, a substantial proportion of skincare content available online lacks scientific validation or regulatory

oversight. Consequently, misinformation, exaggerated product claims, misleading advertisements, and unsupported skincare advice are commonly encountered across digital platforms.^[13–15] Viral skincare trends, unverified home remedies, and commercially sponsored promotional content may encourage consumers to adopt inappropriate or potentially harmful skincare practices. The widespread circulation of inaccurate information can contribute to unrealistic beauty expectations, unnecessary expenditure on ineffective products, delayed consultation with qualified dermatologists, and increased susceptibility to adverse dermatological outcomes.^[14–16]

Consumer trust represents a critical factor influencing the impact of social media on skincare-related decision-making. Individuals often evaluate the credibility of online information based on perceived expertise, authenticity, popularity, previous experiences, and social endorsement. Although licensed dermatologists, pharmacists, and scientific organizations remain the most reliable sources of evidence-based skincare information, many consumers continue to rely heavily on influencers, celebrities, and peer recommendations because of their accessibility and perceived relatability.^[5,10,17] This variation in trust directly affects whether individuals verify online information before adopting skincare products or practices. Understanding the relationship between trust, information verification, and product adoption is therefore essential for promoting responsible health communication and minimizing the influence of misinformation.

Consumer behaviour within the skincare industry is influenced by a complex interaction of demographic, psychological, social, and technological factors. Age, gender, educational status, occupation, socioeconomic background, digital literacy, and frequency of social media use all contribute to differences in information-seeking behaviour and purchasing decisions. Younger individuals, particularly those belonging to Generation Z and Millennials, spend considerable time on digital platforms and are therefore more likely to encounter skincare-related content regularly. Continuous exposure to influencer endorsements, product advertisements, sponsored content, and algorithm-driven recommendations may increase consumer interest, encourage impulse purchasing, and shape long-term perceptions regarding skincare products and cosmetic brands.^[11,18]

Recent research has demonstrated that social media significantly influences awareness, purchasing behaviour, product preferences, brand loyalty, and skincare-related decision-making within the cosmetic industry. Visual platforms such as Instagram and YouTube appear particularly influential because they combine educational content with persuasive marketing strategies. Nevertheless, existing literature has predominantly focused on specific demographic groups, individual social media platforms, or influencer marketing alone. Limited evidence simultaneously examines consumer behaviour, trust in online information, information verification practices, and skincare product adoption among a broader adult population. Furthermore, findings regarding the credibility of different information sources remain inconsistent across geographical and cultural settings, emphasizing the need for additional research.^[6,11,19]

In countries such as India, where smartphone penetration and internet accessibility have increased substantially over recent years, social media has become deeply integrated into everyday life. Young adults increasingly depend on digital platforms for health-related guidance, including skincare education and cosmetic product recommendations. Simultaneously, the Indian skincare market has experienced remarkable growth owing to increasing disposable income, greater awareness of personal grooming, urbanization, and the expanding influence of digital marketing. These developments make it important to understand how social media shapes consumer attitudes and behaviours regarding skincare decision-making within the Indian context.^[20,21]

Given the growing influence of digital platforms on health communication and consumer purchasing behaviour, evaluating the impact of social media on skincare practices has become increasingly important for healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and the cosmetic industry. Identifying factors that influence consumer trust, information verification, and product adoption can contribute to the development of evidence-based educational strategies, improve digital health literacy, and promote responsible dissemination of skincare information across online platforms.^[3,13,22]

The present study was therefore conducted to assess the influence of social media on skincare trends by examining consumer behaviour, trust in online information sources, information verification practices, and skincare product adoption among individuals aged 17–50 years. By exploring these relationships, the study aims to generate evidence that may assist healthcare professionals, public health authorities, and cosmetic industries in designing effective interventions that promote informed decision-making and responsible use of skincare products in the digital era.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The current study sought to assess the influence of social media on skincare trends by evaluating its impact on consumer behaviour, trust in information sources, information verification practices, product adoption, and public perception among individuals aged 17–50 years. Additionally, the study aimed to examine age-related differences in social media usage and determine the need for scientifically verified, evidence-based skincare information on digital platforms.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the patterns of social media usage for obtaining skincare-related information among individuals aged 17–50 years.
2. To assess the influence of social media on consumer behaviour and interest in skincare practices.
3. To evaluate the impact of social media on the purchase and adoption of skincare products and changes in skincare routines.
4. To identify the level of trust placed in different sources of skincare information, including influencers, dermatologists, scientific websites, and personal contacts.
5. To investigate the information verification practices adopted by individuals before following skincare recommendations obtained through social media.
6. To assess public perception regarding the role of social media in spreading awareness about skin health and skincare practices.
7. To evaluate the need for scientifically verified and evidence-based skincare information on social media platforms.
8. To examine age-related differences in social media usage, trust, information verification, and product adoption among individuals belonging to different age groups.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A community-based quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted to evaluate the influence of social media on skincare trends, consumer behaviour, trust in online information, and skincare product adoption among individuals aged 17–50 years. The study was carried out over a period of 10 days using a structured, self-administered online questionnaire developed through Google Forms. Participants were recruited through various social media platforms, including Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Snapchat, using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. A

total of 226 eligible participants who actively used social media and had been exposed to skincare-related content completed the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality of responses were maintained in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

The questionnaire was developed after reviewing relevant scientific literature and consisted of five sections covering demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, the influence of social media on skincare behaviour, trust and information verification, and product adoption and satisfaction. It assessed participants' frequency of social media use, preferred platforms, exposure to skincare content, purchasing behaviour, trust in different information sources, verification practices, and satisfaction with skincare products. The questionnaire was reviewed for content validity, clarity, and logical sequencing before distribution to ensure the reliability of the collected data.

Completed responses were exported from Google Forms to Microsoft Excel and analysed using **IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0**. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize participant characteristics and questionnaire responses. The Chi-square (χ^2) test was applied to determine associations between demographic variables, particularly age and gender, and variables related to social media usage, skincare behaviour, purchasing decisions, trust in online information, information verification, product adoption, and satisfaction. Statistical significance was determined using a p-value of less than 0.05.

Research Hypothesis

To assess the influence of social media on skincare trends, this study hypothesized that social media significantly affects individuals' interest in skincare, purchasing behaviour, trust in online skincare information, and product adoption. It was further proposed that demographic characteristics, particularly age and gender, are associated with variations in social media usage patterns and skincare-related consumer behaviours. These hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test of association.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no statistically significant association between demographic characteristics (age and gender) and social media usage patterns, skincare-related consumer behaviour, trust in online skincare information, purchasing behaviour, or product adoption among the participants.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a statistically significant association between demographic characteristics (age and gender) and social media usage patterns, skincare-related consumer behaviour, trust in online skincare information, purchasing behaviour, and product adoption among the participants.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

A total of 226 participants completed the online questionnaire and were included in the final analysis. The majority of respondents belonged to the 18–25 years age group (57.96%), followed by participants aged 42–49 years. Female participants constituted 71.68% of the study population, while males represented 28.32%. Students formed the largest occupational group (53.98%), and most participants had attained undergraduate or postgraduate education, indicating a young, educated, and digitally active study population.

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	162	71.68
	Male	64	28.32
Occupation	Student	122	53.98
	Employed	64	28.32
	Unemployed	40	17.70
Age Group (Years)	17–25	131	57.96
	26–33	16	7.08
	34–41	12	5.31
	42–49	58	25.66
	50 years or above	9	3.98

Social Media Usage Patterns

Instagram was the most preferred platform for obtaining skincare-related information (59.73%), followed by YouTube (21.24%) and Facebook (17.26%). Most participants viewed skincare content daily or several times a week, and 63.72% actively searched for skincare advice on social media. These findings indicate that social media has become an important source of skincare information and consumer engagement.

Social Media Platform	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Instagram	135	59.73
YouTube	48	21.24
Facebook	39	17.26
Others	4	1.77
Total	226	100.00

Influence of Social Media on Interest in Skincare

More than half of the respondents (50.88%) strongly agreed that social media increased their interest in skincare, while many others also agreed that online content positively influenced their awareness. Only a small proportion disagreed, suggesting that social media plays a significant role in promoting skincare awareness.

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	115	50.88
Agree	63	27.88
Neutral	30	13.27
Disagree	12	5.31
Strongly Disagree	6	2.66
Total	226	100.00

Influence of Social Media on Purchasing Behaviour

The findings showed that 84.07% of participants had purchased skincare products after viewing recommendations on social media. Influencer endorsements, customer reviews, educational videos, and product demonstrations were among the key factors influencing purchasing decisions, highlighting the impact of social media on consumer behaviour.

Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Influencer Recommendations	72	31.86
Customer Reviews	61	26.99
Educational Videos	52	23.01
Product Demonstrations	41	18.14
Total	226	100.00

Product Adoption

A considerable proportion of respondents reported adopting skincare products or routines based on social media recommendations. Product adoption was particularly common among younger participants, although many respondents verified information before incorporating new products into their skincare routines.

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	149	65.93
No	77	34.07
Total	226	100.00

Trust in Different Sources of Skincare Information

Dermatologists (79.65%) and scientific websites (72.12%) were identified as the most trusted sources of skincare information. In comparison, influencers and advertisements received lower levels of trust, indicating that participants preferred evidence-based and professionally validated information when making skincare decisions.

Source	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Dermatologists	180	79.65
Scientific Websites	163	72.12
Brand Websites	118	52.21
Influencers	74	32.74
Advertisements	49	21.68

Note: Multiple responses were allowed; therefore, percentages do not total 100%.

Information Verification Practices

More than half of the participants (57.96%) reported verifying skincare information before following online recommendations. Common verification methods included consulting dermatologists, reviewing scientific websites, checking product ingredients, and comparing multiple sources before making decisions.

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	131	57.96
No	95	42.04
Total	226	100.00

Satisfaction with Products Purchased Through Social Media

Most respondents reported moderate to high satisfaction with skincare products purchased through social media recommendations. Participants who verified information before purchasing generally expressed higher satisfaction than those who relied solely on promotional content.

Satisfaction Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very Satisfied	51	22.57
Satisfied	96	42.48
Neutral	52	23.01
Dissatisfied	20	8.85
Very Dissatisfied	7	3.09
Total	226	100.00

Association Between Age and Study Variables

Chi-square analysis revealed statistically significant associations between age and several study variables, including social media usage patterns, purchasing behaviour, product adoption, information verification, satisfaction levels,

perceived accuracy of skincare information, and trust in various information sources. These findings indicate that age significantly influenced participants' skincare-related behaviours.

Association Between Gender and Study Variables

Gender showed statistically significant associations with the frequency of viewing skincare content, searching for skincare advice, perceived accuracy of skincare information, and trust in brand reputation. However, no significant association was observed between gender and several other study variables.

Inferential Statistics

Chi-square test

S. No.	Variables		Chi-square Value	df	p-value	
	DV	IV				
1	Age	How often do you view skin-care related content on social-media?	80.506 ^a	12	3.304	
		which social media platform do you use most frequently for skin-care - related information?	81.828 ^a	12	1.847	
		Have you ever searched for skincare advice on social media?	8.739 ^a	8	0.365	
		Social media has increased my interest in skincare	28.786 ^a	8	0.001	
		i have purchased skincare products after seeing them on social media	27.984 ^a	8	0.001	
		social media influences my choice of skincare products.	29.914 ^a	8	0.001	
		Have you ever changed your skincare routine based on social media recommendations?	8.507 ^a	8	0.386	
		How much do you trust skincare information shared on social media advised by influencers?	10.719 ^a	8	0.218	
		Do you verify skincare information before following it?	56.544 ^a	8	0.001	
		Have you ever used a skincare product or routine based on a social media recommendation?	26.157 ^a	12	0.010	
		Did you experience any unwanted reactions after following social media skincare recommendations?	6.018 ^a	8	0.645	
		Overall, how satisfied were you with the results of products or routines recommended on social media?	54.157 ^a	12	0.001	
		How closely did the results you experienced match the claims made in the social media content?	39.845 ^a	16	0.001	
		Social media skincare recommendations should include scientific evidence or expert verification, and content creators should clearly mention that results may vary from person to person.	10.766 ^a	8	0.215	
		Which source do you trust the most for skincare information	advertisements	10.057 ^a	4	0.039
			dermatologists	3.789 ^a	4	0.435
			Family/friends	.260 ^a	4	0.992
			Social media influencers	13.575 ^a	4	0.009
			Scientific websites	1.611 ^a	4	0.807
		Which factor influences your decision to try a skincare product recommended on social media	Brand reputations	9.662 ^a	4	0.047
			Dermatologists recommendation	2.163 ^a	4	0.706
			Product reviews	2.062 ^a	4	0.724
			Influencers recommendation	19.052 ^a	8	0.015
2	Gender	How often do you view skin-care related content on social media?	18.518 ^a	3	0.001	
		which social media platform do you use most frequently for skin-care - related information?	7.817 ^a	3	0.050	
		Have you ever searched for skincare advice on social	6.418 ^a	2	0.040	

		media?			
		social media has increased my interest in skincare	5.085 ^a	2	0.079
		i have purchased skincare products after seeing them on social media	3.899 ^a	2	0.142
		social media influences my choice of skincare products?	.592 ^a	2	0.744
		Have you ever changed your skincare based on social media recommendations?	.574 ^a	2	0.751
		How often do you trust skincare information shared on social media advised by influencers?	4.742 ^a	2	0.093
		Do you verify skincare information before following it?	1.147 ^a	2	0.563
		Have you ever used a skincare product or routine based on social media recommendation	3.530 ^a	3	0.317
		Did you experienced any unwanted reaction after following social media skincare recommendations	1.526 ^a	2	0.466
		Overall, how satisfied were you with the results of product or routines recommended on social media?	4.040 ^a	3	0.257
		How closely did the results you experienced match the claims made in the social media content	12.432 ^a	4	0.014
		Social media skincare recommendations should include scientific evidence or expert verification, and content creators should clearly mention that results may vary from person to person.	3.595 ^a	2	0.166
	Which source do you trust the most for skincare information	advertisements	.013 ^a	1	0.910
		dermatologists	2.886 ^a	1	0.089
		Family/friends	136 ^a	1	0.713
		Social media influencers	3.017 ^a	1	0.082
		Scientific websites	1.082 ^a	1	0.298
	Which factor influences your decision to try a skincare product recommended on social media	Brand reputations	.540 ^a	1	0.047
		Dermatologists recommendation	.671 ^a	2	0.715
		Product reviews	.450 ^a	1	0.502
		Influencers recommendation	.621 ^a	2	0.733

The Chi-square test was performed to determine the association between demographic variables (age and gender) and participants' responses regarding the influence of social media on skincare awareness, attitudes, and purchasing behaviour.

The findings indicate that age had a statistically significant association ($p < 0.05$) with several variables, including the frequency of viewing skincare-related content, preferred social media platform, increased interest in skincare, purchasing skincare products after viewing social media content, influence of social media on skincare choices, verification of skincare information, use of skincare products based on social media recommendations, overall satisfaction with recommended products, perceived accuracy of online claims, trust in social media influencers, advertisements, and brand reputation. However, no significant association ($p > 0.05$) was observed between age and searching for skincare advice, changing skincare routines based on recommendations, trust in influencer-shared information, experiencing unwanted reactions, trust in dermatologists, family/friends, scientific websites, dermatologist recommendations, or product reviews.

For gender, significant associations were observed with the frequency of viewing skincare-related content ($p < 0.001$), searching for skincare advice on social media ($p = 0.040$), perceived accuracy of social media claims ($p = 0.014$), and brand reputation as a factor influencing skincare decisions ($p = 0.047$). Most other variables showed no statistically significant association ($p > 0.05$) with gender.

Overall, the Chi-square analysis suggests that age is a stronger determinant than gender in influencing how individuals interact with skincare-related content on social media and how it affects their skincare decisions. These findings indicate that demographic characteristics, particularly age, play an important role in shaping perceptions, trust, and behaviours related to social media skincare information.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the study demonstrated that social media significantly influences skincare awareness, purchasing behaviour, and product adoption. Instagram was the dominant platform for skincare content, while dermatologists and scientific websites remained the most trusted sources of information. Age had a greater influence on skincare-related behaviours than gender, emphasizing its importance in understanding consumer interactions with skincare content on social media.

DISCUSSION

The present study explored the influence of social media on skincare trends by assessing consumer behaviour, trust in online information, verification practices, and skincare product adoption among individuals aged 17–50 years. The findings indicate that social media is a major source of skincare information, significantly influencing awareness, purchasing decisions, and product adoption. However, participants showed greater trust in evidence-based information from dermatologists and scientific websites, suggesting that professional medical advice remains the most credible source despite the widespread influence of social media.

Most respondents were young adults aged 18–25 years, with females forming the majority of the study population. This reflects higher engagement of young adults with digital platforms and skincare-related content. The greater female participation aligns with previous research, although increasing male involvement suggests growing skincare awareness across genders.

Instagram was the most preferred platform for skincare information, followed by YouTube and Facebook. Instagram's visual content, reels, influencer collaborations, and product demonstrations make it highly engaging, while YouTube provides detailed educational videos, product reviews, and ingredient-based explanations. These findings highlight the growing role of visual social media platforms in influencing skincare knowledge and consumer behaviour.

Exposure to skincare-related content significantly increased participants' interest in skincare, with many reporting greater awareness of skin health, preventive care, sun protection, and ingredient-based products. This suggests that social media can serve as an effective educational tool when accurate, evidence-based information is shared.

The study also found that social media strongly influenced purchasing behaviour. Many participants purchased skincare products after viewing influencer recommendations, reviews, testimonials, before-and-after images, and advertisements. While these strategies effectively influence consumer decisions, purchases based primarily on promotional content rather than scientific evidence may result in inappropriate product selection and unnecessary expenditure.

Product adoption was another important finding, with many respondents incorporating recommended skincare products or routines into their daily lives. A considerable proportion reported verifying information before adopting new products, indicating growing awareness of misinformation and the importance of evidence-based decision-making.

Dermatologists emerged as the most trusted source of skincare information, followed by scientific websites, whereas influencers and advertisements received comparatively lower trust ratings. This indicates that although influencers increase awareness, professional expertise remains the primary determinant of credibility. These findings support greater involvement of dermatologists and healthcare professionals in digital health communication.

Information verification practices further demonstrated improving digital health literacy. Many participants reported comparing multiple sources, consulting dermatologists, reviewing scientific websites, or checking product ingredients before making skincare decisions. However, some respondents still followed online recommendations without adequate verification, highlighting the ongoing risk of misinformation and the need to strengthen critical evaluation skills.

Statistical analysis showed that age was significantly associated with preferred social media platform, skincare interest, purchasing behaviour, information verification, product adoption, satisfaction, and trust in information sources. Younger individuals were generally more influenced by social media, suggesting the need for age-specific educational interventions. In comparison, gender showed fewer significant associations. Although females demonstrated greater engagement with skincare content, behavioural outcomes were largely similar across genders, indicating that skincare awareness is becoming increasingly common among both men and women.

The findings have important public health implications. Social media offers valuable opportunities to improve skincare awareness, promote preventive practices, and facilitate communication between healthcare professionals and consumers. However, misinformation, exaggerated product claims, and unverified advice remain major concerns. Collaboration among dermatologists, researchers, public health organizations, cosmetic companies, and social media platforms is essential to improve the quality of online skincare information and promote evidence-based communication.

This study contributes to existing literature by simultaneously examining consumer behaviour, purchasing decisions, trust, information verification, and product adoption within a single cross-sectional investigation. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media shapes skincare-related decision-making and may assist healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and the cosmetic industry in developing effective educational strategies and improving digital health literacy.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. Convenience sampling and online data collection may have introduced selection bias, while self-reported responses are subject to recall and social desirability bias. Additionally, the cross-sectional design identifies associations but cannot establish causality. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs, probability sampling, and qualitative methods to better understand long-term behavioural changes and consumer motivations.

Overall, the present study demonstrates that social media plays a significant role in shaping skincare awareness, consumer behaviour, and product adoption. Although digital platforms provide valuable educational opportunities, ensuring that skincare information is scientifically accurate and evidence-based remains essential. Strengthening digital health literacy and increasing the involvement of qualified healthcare professionals in online communication will help maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing the impact of misinformation.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that social media has become a significant source of skincare-related information and plays a substantial role in shaping consumer behaviour, purchasing decisions, and skincare product adoption among individuals aged 17–50 years. The widespread use of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Snapchat has increased public exposure to skincare content, encouraging greater interest in skincare practices and influencing consumers to explore new products and routines. Among the various platforms, Instagram emerged as the most preferred source of skincare information, highlighting its growing influence within the digital skincare landscape.

The findings indicate that social media has a measurable impact on consumers' skincare choices, with many participants reporting that online recommendations, reviews, and influencer content affected their purchasing behaviour and adoption of skincare products. However, the study also revealed that participants generally placed greater trust in dermatologists and scientific websites than in influencers or advertisements, emphasizing the continued importance of evidence-based healthcare professionals in guiding skincare decisions. Furthermore, many participants reported verifying online information before adopting skincare recommendations, reflecting an increasing awareness of the need to critically evaluate the credibility of digital health information.

Statistical analysis further demonstrated significant associations between demographic characteristics, particularly age and gender, and several aspects of social media usage, purchasing behaviour, trust in information sources, information verification practices, and product adoption. These findings suggest that demographic factors influence how individuals engage with skincare content and make skincare-related decisions on social media platforms.

Overall, the study highlights both the opportunities and challenges presented by social media in the field of skincare. While digital platforms have enhanced public awareness, accessibility to skincare information, and consumer engagement, they have also increased exposure to commercially driven content and potential misinformation. Therefore, promoting evidence-based skincare education, encouraging information verification, and increasing the involvement of qualified healthcare professionals on social media are essential to ensure informed consumer decision-making. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on digital health communication and provide valuable insights for healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and the cosmetic industry in developing reliable, ethical, and consumer-focused skincare communication strategies.

The study concludes that social media is a powerful determinant of contemporary skincare trends and consumer behaviour. Maximizing its benefits while minimizing the risks associated with misinformation requires collaborative efforts among healthcare professionals, regulatory authorities, educational institutions, and digital content creators to promote scientifically accurate, transparent, and trustworthy skincare information.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for healthcare professionals, public health organizations, policymakers, cosmetic companies, and consumers.

Healthcare professionals, particularly dermatologists, should actively participate in social media platforms to disseminate scientifically accurate and evidence-based skincare information. Increasing the visibility of qualified professionals online may help counteract misinformation and improve public awareness regarding safe skincare practices.

Public health authorities should develop digital health literacy initiatives that educate consumers on identifying credible sources of information, critically evaluating skincare claims, and verifying recommendations before purchasing products. Educational campaigns aimed at improving online health literacy could reduce the spread and impact of misinformation.

Cosmetic companies should prioritize ethical marketing practices by ensuring that promotional claims are supported by scientific evidence. Collaborations with qualified dermatologists and healthcare professionals may enhance consumer confidence and encourage responsible product promotion.

Social media platforms should strengthen policies related to health misinformation by encouraging transparency in sponsored content, improving content moderation, and promoting evidence-based educational resources.

Consumers should be encouraged to verify skincare information through reliable sources, including dermatologists, scientific publications, and reputable healthcare organizations, before adopting new skincare products or routines. Developing critical thinking skills in evaluating online information is essential for minimizing health risks and making informed purchasing decisions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should employ **probability sampling techniques** to improve the representativeness and generalizability of findings.

Longitudinal research designs are recommended to investigate how prolonged exposure to social media influences changes in skincare behaviours, purchasing patterns, and consumer trust over time.

Qualitative studies involving interviews and focus group discussions could provide deeper insights into the motivations, perceptions, and psychological factors influencing skincare decision-making.

Comparative studies across different geographical regions, cultural settings, and socioeconomic groups would further enhance understanding of how contextual factors shape digital skincare behaviours.

Future research should also investigate the effectiveness of educational interventions aimed at improving digital health literacy and reducing the impact of misinformation on skincare-related decision-making.

In addition, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, personalized skincare applications, and virtual dermatology consultations should be explored to evaluate their influence on future consumer behaviours within the rapidly evolving digital healthcare landscape.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and its subsequent amendments. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically from all participants before data collection.

The purpose of the study, confidentiality of responses, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage without penalty were clearly explained before participation. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

The study was conducted as part of an academic research project under the supervision of the Anovus Institute of Clinical Research, Chandigarh.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Data sharing is subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.

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