

Research Article	Pak-Euro Journal of Medical and Life Sciences
DOI: 10.31580/pjmls.v8i4.3420	Copyright © All rights are reserved by Corresponding Author
Vol. 8 No. 4, 2025: pp. 913-918	
www.readersinsight.net/pjmls	
Revised: November 30, 2025	Accepted: December 19, 2025
Submission: October 07, 2025	Published Online: December 31, 2025

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER DECISION AND MERCHANDISING THE SKIN CARE PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Background: Social media influencers assist the beauty industry by rendering it popular and diverse, by sharing personal information about their life on social media, and by being diverse and acceptable to society. This study aims to identify the most popular social media platform and analyze its impact on consumers' purchasing decisions for skincare and cosmetics.

Methodology: This cross-sectional analysis studied the impact of social media influencers on consumers' purchasing decisions of skin care products. The research was conducted among 100 young urban dwellers aged 18-35 years, frequent users of social media, and individuals who have consumed skincare products. The survey contained 13 questions regarding the use of social media, skincare studies, and product selection factors.

Results: According to a survey, people aged 18-35 use social media as the most popular platform to choose their skin-care products. The most engaged users are on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Discord. 78% of the population uses skincare products, with sunscreens, moisturizers, and serums being the most popular. Skincare shopping happens mostly monthly and influencers play a lesser role.

Conclusion: The influencer industry has been booming and lucrative lately, and more young people are becoming well-known on social media. The survey revealed that the majority of participants spent many hours each day on social media, mostly on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Additionally, the primary source of knowledge about skin care products was social media.

Keywords: Influencer, Products, Skin, Social media

INTRODUCTION

Social media, in contrast to conventional media, makes use of two-way interaction technology that lets people start online discussions, post comments or queries, or both, and receive feedback (1).

People are using social networking sites with increasing frequency. Consequently, it is yet another strong argument for companies to interact with their clientele and promote their goods on social media (1). Social media use in the healthcare industry has recently acknowledged the numerous consequences of people utilizing social media for medical purposes within the healthcare system, and occasionally, it may help patients (2, 3). Approximately 74% of college students use the Internet to search for healthcare information. Unquestionably, social media has benefited millions of individuals worldwide (4). The negative aspect of social media, yet, is that people might be at risk if they follow norms. It might be dangerous to follow skincare trends without understanding how they affect one's skin. Influencers in the skincare and cosmetics space have a big impact on audience members' decisions to purchase products (5, 6). Many individuals are strongly persuaded by the information presented by several influencers and dermatologists on social media on aesthetic medicine (7). Additionally, according to a recent study, 41% of patients adhere to their present or prospective 43% of consumers decided to schedule an appointment as a result of seeing a provider on Instagram and other social media platforms. Social media was also included as one of the top three considerations when buying skin care products and as the sixth consideration when



deciding whether to get cosmetic surgery (8-10). Social media plays a vital role in enhancing brand image, trust, and consumer buying intention. It is essential for differentiating product brands in a competitive online advertising landscape. With half of the global population using social media, it presents significant business opportunities. Effective social media marketing positively influences public perception and promotes the product brand, thereby reducing perceived purchasing risks and affecting consumers' decisions to buy (11).

Social networking sites may be utilized to boost customer trust in a company and reinforce its reputation (12). Brand confidence enables the fulfillment of customer demands and desires by addressing consumer intents and problem-solving needs. It reduces perceived risk and fosters brand trust, which significantly influences purchasing intentions, especially when consumers face uncertainty between similar products (13). The purpose of this study was to determine which social media platform was most widely utilized and to analyze the influence of social media on consumers' decisions to purchase skincare and cosmetics.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

The cross-sectional study inquired into the impact of social media influencers on consumers' purchase decisions of skin care products and recommendations.

STUDY POPULATION

Young individuals who are frequent users of social media and aged between 18 and 35 years form the sample of this study. Urban area-based sampling was done to ensure a representative demographic sample. 100 respondents filled up the questionnaire.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The inclusion criteria were 18–35 years of age, frequent users of one or more social media, and users or former users of skin care products. The exclusion criteria were research participants outside the age limit, non-users of social media, or those who declined to provide informed consent.

SURVEY TOOL

The standardized questionnaire was developed based on the literature of social media marketing and consumer behavior. There were 13 multiple-choice questions in the questionnaire that discussed: Social media platforms usage, Social media usage to research skincare, Usage patterns of skincare products, Social media and influencer influence on purchasing, Product selection factors, brand reputation, price, product claims, and recommendations.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

This study was an online questionnaire with Google Forms. Participants were informed that the study was not obligatory, that their responses would remain confidential, and what the study was about. The responses were gathered in four weeks and then transferred to Microsoft Excel to be analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. For each of the options, the number of responses (n) and percentage (%) were calculated. The analysis was done to identify the most popular platforms, the main drivers of purchase decisions, and the extent of the influence of social media and influencers on consumer behavior. Results were presented in tables and charts for convenience.

RESULTS

The survey showed displayed the use of social media was the most significant factor in skin-care product selection by 100 people aged from 18 to 35 years, as shown in Fig.1a. Out of 100 participants, 82 were females and 22 were males, as demonstrated in Fig. 1b. Facebook (20%) and TikTok (19%) users were

the most active in social media, with Instagram (17%), YouTube (15%), WhatsApp (14%), Twitter (10%), and Discord (5%) following. After being asked if they would use social media to get skin-care-related information, 45% responded that they would use social media to get skin-care-related information occasionally, 25% frequently, 20% never, and 10% as a source of information. Seventy-eight percent of the population reported that they used one or more skin care products; while 22% claimed they did not, as shown in Table I.

Table I. Overview of survey results on the effects of influencers on skin care products purchases on social media

No.	Questions	Response options	Number of responses (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?			
Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?	Instagram	17	17%	
	TikTok	19	19%	
	Facebook	20	20%	
	Twitter	10	10%	
	YouTube	15	15%	
	Discord	5	5%	
	WhatsApp	14	14%	
2	How often do you use social media to research skin care products?			
	Often	25	25%	
	Sometimes	45	45%	
	Rarely	10	10%	
	Never	20	20%	
3	Do you currently use any skin care products?			
	Yes	78	78%	
	No	22	22%	
4	What type of skin care products do you use?			
	Moisturizers	22	22%	
	Serums	18	18%	
	Sunscreens	23	23%	
	Exfoliants	10	10%	
	Face Masks	12	12%	
	Lotion	5	5%	
	Soap	2	2%	
	Face Wash	8	8%	
None	0	0%		
5	How often do you purchase skin care products?			
	Daily	0	0%	
	Weekly	20	20%	
	Monthly	70	70%	
	Rarely	10	10%	
6	Do you follow skin care influencers on social media?			
	Yes	44	44%	
	No	56	56%	
7	How influential are they in your purchasing decisions?			
	Very influential	40	40%	
	Somewhat influential	33	33%	
	Not very influential	22	22%	
	Not at all influential	5	5%	
8	Have you discovered new skin care products through social media?			
	Yes	58	58%	
	No	24	24%	
	Maybe	18	26%	
9	Have you ever purchased a skin care product based on a social media advertisement or influencer recommendation?			
	Yes	66	66%	
	No	34	34%	
10	What factors influence your decision to purchase a skin care product?			
	Product Reviews	22	22%	
	Social Media Ads	15	15%	
	Influencer Recommendations	10	10%	
	Brand Reputation	16	16%	

	Price	13	13%
	My Skin Sensitivity	4	4%
	Dermatologist Advice	8	8%
	Family/Friends Recommendation	4	4%
	Product Claims & Purpose	3	3%
	If Someone I Know Tried It	3	3%
	None	2	2%
11	How important is brand reputation when choosing a skin care product?		
	Very important	56	56%
	Somewhat important	34	34%
	Not very important	6	6%
	Not at all important	4	4%
12	Do you think skin care brands are honest about their products on social media?		
	Yes	55%	68%
	No	23%	23%
	Maybe	22	22%
13	How important is authenticity in skin care influencers to you?		
	Very important	65	65%
	Somewhat important	27	27%
	Not very important	5	5%
	Not at all important	3	3%

Among the skincare products, sunscreens (23%), moisturizers (22%), and serums (18%) were the most common, while exfoliants, face masks, lotions, soaps, and face wash were the least used. Most of the respondents (70%) did the skincare shopping monthly, then weekly (20%), and very infrequently (10%), with no one reporting everyday purchases. As far as social media impact goes, less than half (44%) of the participants were followers of the skincare influencer, and among them, 40% found the influencer's opinion very influential in the purchase of a product, 33% somewhat influenced, 22% not very influenced, and 5% not at all. More than half (58%) of the people confirmed that social media helped them to discover new skincare products, and 55% of the respondents reported that their purchase was triggered by social media advertising or influencer endorsement. The first and most significant factor in the purchase of skincare products was the point of view of others (23%), followed by the brand's reputation (16%) and social media ads (15%). The other factors were: influencer endorsement, cost, and recommendation of the dermatologist, recommendation of a friend or family member, and product claims. The reputation of the brand was also a considerable factor, as 56% of respondents regarded it very important and 34% somewhat important. Just like this, trust in the brands that appear on the social media platforms was also good, and 68% of the respondents confirmed that they think the brands are honest. In short, the results demonstrate that Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram are the most used platforms in searches for and buying behavior of skin care products.

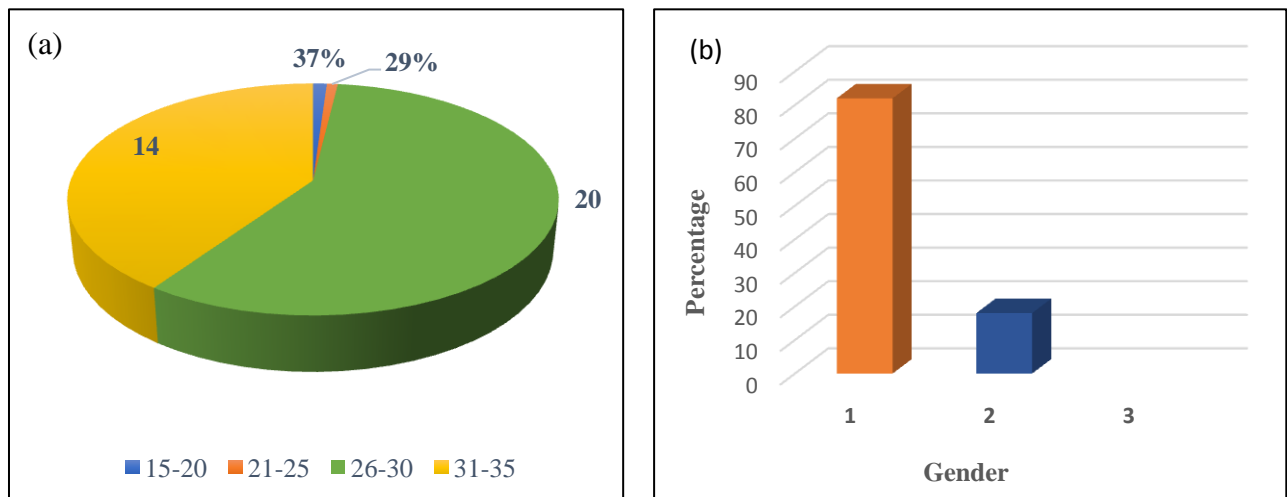


Fig. 1 (a). Age distribution among the participants; (b). Percentage of gender distribution

DISCUSSION

This research investigated the influence of social media sites and endorsement by influencers in consumer skin care decision-making among young adults. According to the data collected in our research, Facebook (20%), TikTok (19%), and Instagram (17%) were the most utilized platforms. This is indicative of the channels of distribution of lifestyle and beauty-related content as mentioned by the authors of multiple recent studies (5). Discord and WhatsApp were the least favorite, which leads to the assumption that messaging-centric or niche community platforms are not where you go for skincare info. The highest number of respondents (78%) were already using skincare products, the most typical being sunscreens, moisturizers, and serums. This state of activity is consistent with the findings of the various studies of consumer behavior, which indicate that the young adult groups are becoming more sensitive concerning sun protection and anti-aging skincare products. The vast majority of participants noted that they purchased every month (70%), therefore demonstrating the presence of consumer engagement but not habitual use. On the one hand, the ability of social media influencers to impact the change of consumer behavior was great. Even though 44 percent of respondents responded by following influencers, 56 percent stated that they bought something because of the recommendation or advertisement by the influencer. This follows the earlier results, which indicate that influencers can alter the minds of customers and make them purchase in case they are perceived as authentic and credible. The credibility of online endorsements in this study showed that 65 percent of the research respondents viewed the genuineness of the influencer as the most important issue. According to our research, the most popular social media platforms were TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. These results are in line with other research (14, 15). The most commonly accessed social media platforms among Saudi Arabian medical students were Twitter, Facebook, and short messaging services, according to research by Bahkali *et al.*, and Alsuraihi *et al.*, (14, 15). It is important to recognize that those investigations, which were carried out in 2015 and 2016 and primarily focused on users of the Twitter and Facebook platforms, may not accurately reflect the current state of commonly used social media platforms or applications. As a result, more research utilizing more recent data is required. More than half of Saudi citizens strongly prefer using Twitter and WhatsApp to learn and share information, according to another survey (15, 16). Many consumer decision-making models propose three general steps: information search, assessment of various options and post-purchase actions (17). As a result, consumers assess various products before making a choice. This turns into the main justification for why all corporations and enterprises nowadays need to be active on social media. This is due to the fact that 74% of consumers base their purchasing decisions on social media (18).

CONCLUSION

The influence business has been flourishing and lucrative in the recent past, as more youth gain fame on social media. This study attempted to figure out the reasons that contribute to the authority of social media influencers and the manner in which they influence the minds of young people and their judgment. The next generation of research would now have the opportunity to better understand how certain variables may influence the decisions made by young fans and increase their loyalty to social media influencers, depending on the results. Expertise, beauty, and believability are probably the three most significant features of a social media influencer. The attributes mentioned in this study, especially believability, are significant as they can influence the behavior of young people towards the social media endorser. This should also be known among experts.

Practical Recommendations:

For marketers; brands must partner with influencers with consistent authenticity and expertise, since trust and purchasing desire are vital defining factors of brands. In addition, honest product claims can be more credible through open communication and honesty. For consumers; people should consider influencer content, look for dermatological advice, and be mindful of the potential risks involved in trying online skincare trends without a professional certification.

Limitations:

There are several limitations in the study that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. To begin with, the sample size was quite small (n=100), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Also, all young adults residing in urban regions were the participants, which do not represent the behavior of the rural population and older individuals.

Author's Contributions:

AS Conceptualized the study and collected data; RF Questionnaire design and data compilation; FT Data analysis and interpretation; SM Supervised the research work; NS contributed to manuscript writing and editing.

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