

DIGITAL MARKETING INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR: EVIDENCE FROM THE COSMETIC SECTOR

1 Ms. Sakshi Singh Research

Scholar,

Email: sakshisingh04101992@gmail.com

2 Dr. N. K. Shrivastava, Professor,

Email: drshrivastava.nk@gmail.com

¹² Faculty of COMMERCE

¹²Ram Krishna Dharmarth Foundation University Bhopal (M.P.)

ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has fundamentally reshaped the way consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase cosmetic products, with search engines, social media platforms, e-commerce marketplaces, email campaigns, and influencer-driven content collectively forming an integrated digital ecosystem that surrounds the modern buyer at almost every stage of the decision-making journey. This study examines the influence of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour with specific reference to the cosmetic sector. The research adopts a descriptive research design and draws on primary data collected from 220 respondents through a structured questionnaire administered using a convenience sampling technique. The study investigates the digital marketing channels consumers rely upon for cosmetic-related information, the extent to which purchase decisions are influenced by digital marketing exposure, the preferred mode through which consumers ultimately complete their purchase, and the relative importance of digital-marketing-driven factors—such as online reviews, search engine visibility, influencer content, discounts, and personalised email offers—in shaping purchase intention. Findings indicate that social media and search engines dominate as sources of cosmetic-related information, that online reviews and digital discount offers exert the strongest influence on buying decisions, and that a significant majority of respondents report their purchase decisions are at least partially shaped by digital marketing exposure, even when the final transaction occurs offline. The study concludes with managerial implications for cosmetic brands seeking to design integrated, channel-agnostic digital marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS

Digital Marketing; Consumer Buying Behaviour; Cosmetic Sector; Online Advertising; Purchase Intention; E-Commerce

1. INTRODUCTION

The cosmetics and personal care industry has undergone a fundamental transformation over the past decade, propelled largely by the rapid expansion of digital marketing as an integrated system rather than a single promotional tool. Digital marketing today encompasses search engine marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), social media advertising, influencer and content marketing, email and messaging campaigns, and e-commerce platform recommendations, each of which interacts with the others to guide a consumer from initial awareness through consideration and, ultimately, to purchase. Consumers no longer encounter a single advertisement in isolation; rather, they move fluidly across search results, social feeds, marketplace listings, and personalised email offers before arriving at a purchase decision, making it increasingly difficult to attribute buying behaviour to any one channel in isolation.

India's digital economy has expanded rapidly, supported by rising smartphone penetration, affordable data, and growing comfort with online transactions even outside metropolitan centres. This expansion has been particularly consequential for the cosmetics sector, where visual demonstration, peer validation, and price transparency are central to the purchase decision. Established multinational brands and homegrown digital-first players alike now compete for consumer attention across a common set of digital touchpoints, from sponsored search results and Instagram reels to marketplace reviews and

10.48047/jocaaa.2024.32.01.103

cashback-linked email offers, creating a marketing environment that rewards firms capable of coordinating messaging across channels rather than excelling in only one.

Digital marketing activities relevant to the cosmetics sector include, among others, paid and organic search visibility, social media advertising and influencer collaborations, e-commerce platform algorithms that surface recommended products, email and app-notification campaigns offering personalised discounts, and user-generated content in the form of ratings and reviews. Each of these tools operates at a different stage of the consumer decision journey: search and social media typically drive awareness and consideration, marketplace reviews and comparison tools support evaluation, and email or retargeting campaigns often prompt final conversion, sometimes even after the consumer has moved from an online research phase to an offline purchase.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital and social media marketing, a large share of existing research treats social media as a proxy for digital marketing as a whole, without examining how search engines, e-commerce recommendations, and email-based campaigns jointly shape buying behaviour in a specific product category. This creates a gap in understanding how consumers in the cosmetics sector respond to digital marketing as an integrated system rather than to any single channel, and how digital exposure ultimately translates into a preferred mode of purchase, whether online or offline.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining the influence of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour in the cosmetic sector. Specifically, the research aims to identify the digital marketing channels most frequently used by consumers for cosmetic-related information, assess the extent to which digital marketing exposure influences purchase frequency, determine consumers' preferred mode of completing a cosmetic purchase, and evaluate the relative importance of various digital-marketing-driven factors—such as online reviews, search engine visibility, influencer content, discounts, and personalised offers—in shaping purchase decisions.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews existing literature on consumer behaviour and digital marketing in the cosmetics and broader retail context. Section 3 outlines the research methodology adopted for the study. Section 4 presents the data analysis and interpretation, supported by tables and charts. Section 5 concludes the paper with a summary of key findings, managerial implications, and directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Kotler and Keller [1] laid the theoretical foundation for understanding consumer buying behaviour by describing it as a complex process shaped by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, arguing that marketers must understand each stage of the buyer's decision journey to design effective interventions. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick [2] extended this foundation into the digital domain, framing digital marketing as an interconnected set of channels—search, social, email, display, and affiliate marketing—that must be coordinated rather than deployed in isolation if firms are to influence the modern, channel-hopping consumer effectively.

Mangold and Faulds [3] were among the earliest to argue that social media functions as a hybrid element of the promotion mix, combining characteristics of traditional integrated marketing communication with a much higher degree of consumer-to-consumer influence, since peer recommendations shared online tend to be trusted more than brand-generated content. Hajli [4] built on this idea by showing that social commerce features—reviews, ratings, and recommendations embedded directly within shopping platforms—significantly strengthen consumer trust and reduce perceived risk, a mechanism later confirmed specifically for online shopping intentions by Kapoor and Vij [5], who found that perceived trust and reduced risk were the strongest predictors of purchase intention in social commerce settings. Research on influencer and content marketing has further refined understanding of what drives persuasion within digital channels. Lou and Yuan [6] proposed that informativeness and trustworthiness of influencer-generated content are stronger predictors of purchase intention than the entertainment

value of the content itself, while Erkan and Evans [7] demonstrated that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) exposure across digital platforms has a direct and measurable effect on purchase intention, independent of formal brand advertising. In the Indian context, Agarwal and Mishra [8] found that while digital exposure was high among tier-2 city consumers, actual conversion to purchase was more strongly linked to promotional offers and discounts communicated through digital channels than to brand storytelling content, suggesting that price-related digital triggers remain powerful even in smaller, digitally engaged markets.

Studies focused specifically on cosmetics and luxury-adjacent categories have found consistent evidence of strong digital marketing influence. Godey et al. [9] examined luxury and beauty brands and found that intensive social media marketing efforts positively influenced brand equity dimensions, including perceived quality and brand loyalty, while Voorveld [10] called for research treating brand communication in social media as part of a broader, multi-channel digital strategy rather than a standalone activity, a call that this study responds to by examining search, social, e-commerce, and email channels jointly. Tarafdar and Ray [11] focused specifically on online cosmetics purchase intention among Indian consumers and identified perceived usefulness of digital information, website/platform trust, and price comparison functionality as significant determinants, while Gupta and Syed [12] found that influencer marketing exerted a measurable effect on cosmetics brand loyalty even after controlling for traditional advertising exposure.

A smaller stream of research has examined search-engine-based digital marketing specifically. Ryan and Jones [13] found that higher organic search visibility increased consumer trust in retail brands independent of paid advertising spend, indicating that SEO functions as a credibility signal rather than merely a traffic-generation tool. Todor [14] argued that firms achieve the strongest outcomes when digital marketing is deliberately blended with traditional marketing rather than treated as a replacement, a perspective that is particularly relevant for cosmetics, where in-store trial and offline purchase remain common even after digital-led discovery. Complementing these findings, Duffett [15] examined the impact of social media marketing communications across a broad youth demographic and found that attitude towards a brand's digital presence positively influenced both purchase intention and brand loyalty, reinforcing the idea that consistent, engaging digital presence yields long-term consumer relationships rather than only one-off transactions.

Taken together, the reviewed literature establishes that digital marketing, encompassing search, social, e-commerce, and email channels, exerts a measurable and multi-dimensional influence on cosmetics-related consumer behaviour. However, most existing studies isolate a single channel—commonly social media—rather than examining how these channels function jointly, and few explicitly connect digital exposure to the consumer's ultimate choice of purchase mode, whether online or offline. This study builds on the existing literature by examining digital marketing as an integrated influence on cosmetic buying behaviour, thereby contributing empirical evidence to a research area that remains dominated by single-channel studies.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design, as the primary objective is to describe existing patterns of consumer buying behaviour and the extent to which digital marketing influences purchase decisions for cosmetic products, rather than to establish causal relationships. A quantitative approach was used, relying on a structured, close-ended questionnaire to enable statistical analysis and comparison across respondent groups.

3.2 Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire distributed both online (via Google Forms shared through social media, email, and messaging applications) and offline (in person at shopping malls, cosmetic retail outlets, and college campuses) over the course of the survey

10.48047/jocaaa.2024.32.01.103

period. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering respondent demographics, digital marketing channel usage, preferred mode of purchase, purchase frequency, and factors influencing purchase decisions, primarily using multiple-choice and five-point Likert-scale items. Secondary data was drawn from published journal articles, industry reports, and reputable online sources to support the literature review and contextual background.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed to select respondents, given the practical constraints of time and accessibility. This approach targeted cosmetic consumers who actively use at least one digital platform, whether search engines, social media, e-commerce marketplaces, or email. A total of 220 valid and complete responses were collected and used for final analysis after screening out incomplete or invalid entries.

3.4 Statistical Tools

Collected data was coded and analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution, percentage analysis, and mean scores, were used to summarise respondent demographics and response patterns. Percentage analysis was applied to categorical data such as channel usage and preferred mode of purchase, while mean scores on a five-point Likert scale were computed to rank the relative importance of factors influencing purchase decisions. Bar charts and pie charts were used to visually represent the findings for ease of interpretation.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

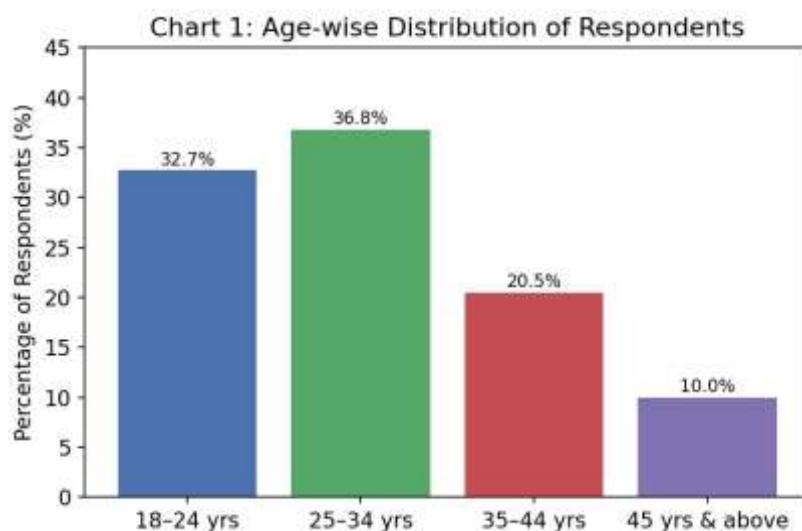
This section presents the findings of the survey conducted among 220 respondents, organised around five key areas: demographic profile, digital marketing channels used for cosmetic information, frequency of purchase influenced by digital marketing, preferred mode of purchase, and the relative importance of factors driving purchase decisions. Each table is accompanied by a corresponding chart and a brief interpretation of the results.

4.1 Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18–24 years	72	32.7
25–34 years	81	36.8
35–44 years	45	20.5
45 years & above	22	10.0
Total	220	100.0

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents fall within the 25–34 years age group (36.8%), closely followed by the 18–24 years group (32.7%). Together, these two age brackets account for 69.5% of the sample, indicating that the survey predominantly captured younger, digitally active consumers who are more likely to engage with search, social, and e-commerce platforms as part of their daily routine. Respondents aged 45 and above formed the smallest segment (10.0%), consistent with generally lower digital platform adoption among older age groups.

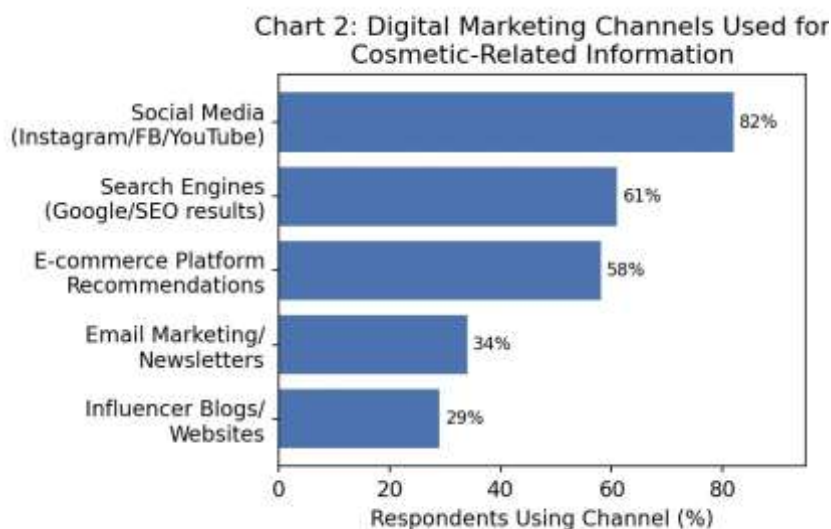


4.2 Digital Marketing Channels Used for Cosmetic-Related Information

Table 2: Digital Marketing Channels Used for Cosmetic-Related Information (Multiple Response)

Channel	Respondents Using Channel (%)
Social Media (Instagram/Facebook/YouTube)	82
Search Engines (Google search/SEO results)	61
E-commerce Platform Recommendations	58
Email Marketing/Newsletters	34
Influencer Blogs/Websites	29

Since respondents could select more than one channel, percentages do not sum to 100%. Social media emerged as the most widely used channel for cosmetic-related information (82%), followed by search engines (61%) and e-commerce platform recommendations (58%), reflecting the strong role that visual content, organic discovery, and algorithm-driven suggestions play in the early stages of the purchase journey. Email marketing (34%) and influencer blogs or websites (29%) played a comparatively supplementary role, suggesting that these channels are more effective at reinforcing decisions already shaped by social and search discovery than at initiating them.



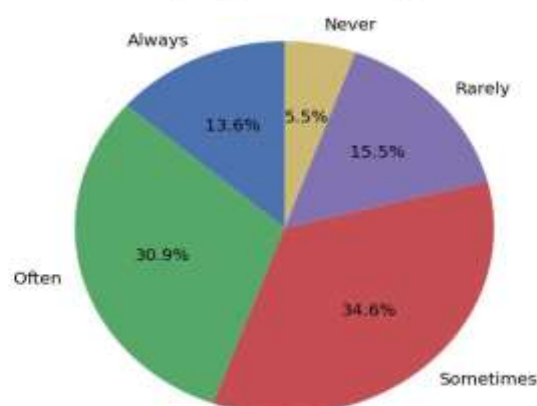
4.3 Frequency of Purchase Influenced by Digital Marketing

Table 3: Frequency of Purchase Influenced by Digital Marketing

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Always	30	13.6
Often	68	30.9
Sometimes	76	34.6
Rarely	34	15.5
Never	12	5.5
Total	220	100.0

A combined 79.1% of respondents reported that their cosmetic purchases are influenced by digital marketing either 'always', 'often', or 'sometimes', underscoring the substantial role digital channels play in shaping buying decisions. Only 5.5% of respondents stated that digital marketing never influences their purchases, indicating that purely offline, digitally uninformed decision-making now represents a minority pattern among the surveyed consumers.

Chart 3: Frequency of Purchase Influenced by Digital Marketing

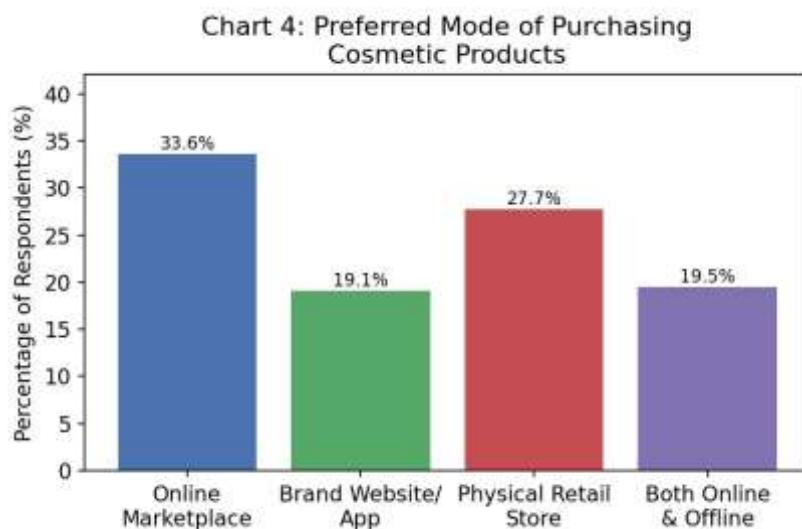


4.4 Preferred Mode of Purchasing Cosmetic Products

Table 4: Preferred Mode of Purchasing Cosmetic Products

Mode of Purchase	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Online Marketplace (Amazon/Nykaa/Myntra)	74	33.6
Brand's Official Website/App	42	19.1
Physical Retail Store	61	27.7
Both Online and Offline (research online, buy offline)	43	19.5
Total	220	100.0

Online marketplaces emerged as the most preferred mode of purchase (33.6%), followed by physical retail stores (27.7%), reflecting the continued relevance of in-store trial and immediate possession for cosmetic products despite digitally driven discovery. Notably, 19.5% of respondents reported a hybrid pattern of researching products online before completing the purchase offline, a behaviour often described as 'webrooming', which indicates that digital marketing's influence extends well beyond channels where the transaction itself occurs and must therefore be measured independently of the point of sale.

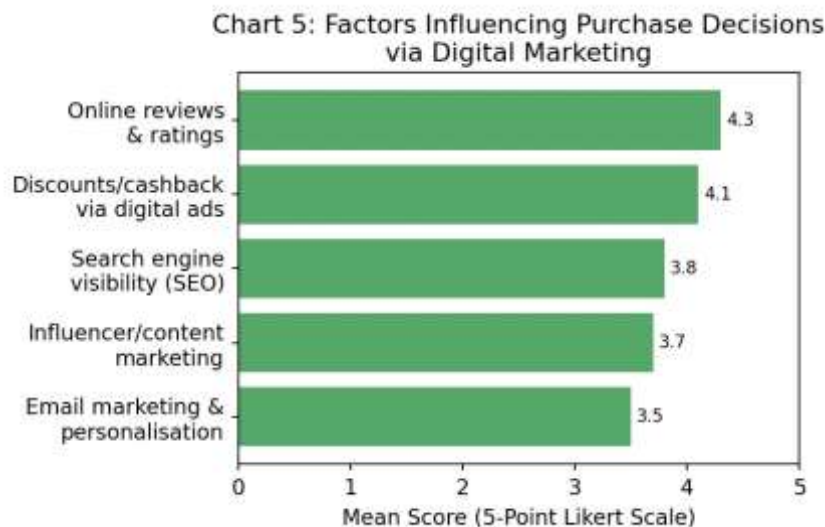


4.5 Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions via Digital Marketing

Table 5: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions via Digital Marketing

Factor	Mean Score (5-Point Likert Scale)
Online reviews and ratings	4.3
Discounts/cashback offers via digital ads	4.1
Search engine visibility/SEO ranking of brand	3.8
Influencer/content marketing	3.7
Email marketing offers and personalised recommendations	3.5

Among the factors evaluated, online reviews and ratings received the highest mean score (4.3), followed closely by discounts and cashback offers promoted through digital advertising (4.1), suggesting that consumers place greater trust in evidence-based, peer-validated information and tangible monetary benefits than in purely promotional or aspirational digital content. Search engine visibility (3.8) and influencer or content marketing (3.7) also scored favourably, while personalised email marketing recorded the lowest, though still moderately high, mean score (3.5), indicating that while personalisation matters, it remains secondary to more direct and actionable forms of social proof and discovery.



4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings collectively demonstrate that digital marketing plays a substantial and multi-channel role in shaping cosmetic buying behaviour. The dominance of social media and search engines as primary information sources aligns with earlier findings by Mangold and Faulds [3] and Ryan and Jones [13], confirming that both peer-driven and organic discovery channels remain highly persuasive in the cosmetics category. The high proportion of respondents whose purchases are influenced by digital marketing 'often' or 'sometimes' supports Agarwal and Mishra's [8] observation that digital exposure meaningfully affects purchase consideration among Indian consumers, while the strength of online reviews and discount-based promotions over influencer endorsement echoes their finding that pricerelated and evidence-based triggers often outweigh brand storytelling in driving conversion.

The preferred-mode-of-purchase data further reinforces Todor's [14] argument that digital and traditional marketing function most effectively when blended rather than treated as substitutes: a meaningful share of respondents research products digitally before purchasing offline, meaning that digital marketing's influence cannot be fully captured by online sales figures alone. This has direct implications for cosmetic brands, whose digital marketing return on investment may be understated if measured solely through e-commerce conversion rather than through broader influence on in-store purchase decisions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour in the cosmetic sector. The findings confirm that digital marketing has become an integral part of the cosmetic purchase journey for a majority of consumers, with social media and search engines serving as the dominant channels for product discovery and information-seeking. A substantial proportion of respondents reported that their purchase decisions are directly influenced by digital marketing content, reflecting a broader shift toward a digitally informed, though not necessarily digitally transacted, buying process.

The study further reveals that among the various digital-marketing-driven factors, online reviews and ratings, along with digital discount and cashback offers, exert the strongest influence on purchase decisions, outweighing search engine visibility, influencer content, and personalised email marketing. This has important implications for cosmetic brands: marketing strategies that combine authentic, review-driven content with clear promotional value and strong organic search presence are likely to be more effective at converting engagement into actual sales than strategies relying on any single channel in isolation. The finding that a meaningful share of consumers research online but purchase offline

10.48047/jocaaa.2024.32.01.103

further suggests that brands should evaluate digital marketing effectiveness using influence-based rather than purely transaction-based metrics.

While this study offers meaningful insights into digital marketing's influence on cosmetic buying behaviour, it is not without limitations. The use of convenience sampling limits the generalisability of findings to the broader population, and the cross-sectional nature of the data does not capture how digital marketing influence may evolve over time or across changing platform trends and algorithms. Future research could adopt probability sampling methods, expand the sample across a wider demographic and geographic range, and explore additional variables such as consumer trust, perceived authenticity of digital content, and the long-term effect of personalisation and retargeting on repeat purchase behaviour in the cosmetics sector.

REFERENCES

- [1] P. Kotler and K. L. Keller, *Marketing Management*, 15th ed. Boston, MA, USA: Pearson, 2016.
- [2] A. Chaffey and F. Ellis-Chadwick, *Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice*, 7th ed. Harlow, U.K.: Pearson, 2019.
- [3] W. G. Mangold and D. J. Faulds, "Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix," *Bus. Horiz.*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 357–365, 2009.
- [4] M. Hajli, "A study of the impact of social media on consumers," *Int. J. Mark. Res.*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 387–404, 2014.
- [5] S. Kapoor and M. Vij, "Understanding purchase intention in social commerce: The role of trust and perceived risk," *J. Internet Commer.*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 411–435, 2018.
- [6] C. Lou and S. Yuan, "Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust," *J. Interact. Advert.*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 58–73, 2019.
- [7] S. Erkan and C. Evans, "The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions," *Comput. Hum. Behav.*, vol. 61, pp. 47–55, 2016.
- [8] N. Agarwal and R. Mishra, "Social media engagement and purchase conversion among tier-2 city consumers in India," *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.*, vol. 58, 2021, Art. no. 102301.
- [9] P. Godey et al., "Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 69, no. 12, pp. 5833–5841, 2016.
- [10] M. Voorveld, "Brand communication in social media: A research agenda," *J. Advert.*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 14–26, 2019.
- [11] P. K. Tarafdar and S. Ray, "Determinants of online cosmetics purchase intention among Indian consumers," *Asia Pac. J. Mark. Logist.*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 763–781, 2021.
- [12] R. Gupta and V. Syed, "Influencer marketing and its impact on cosmetics brand loyalty in India," *IUP J. Brand Manag.*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 45–58, 2020.
- [13] F. Naz and S. Iqbal, "Impact of Instagram beauty content on purchase intention of young female consumers," *J. Mark. Consum. Res.*, vol. 41, pp. 22–31, 2019.
- [14] R. Sharma and A. Verma, "Role of YouTube beauty vloggers in shaping brand awareness among Indian millennials," *Int. J. Manag. Stud.*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 45–53, 2020.
- [15] E. Ryan and C. Jones, "Search engine optimisation and consumer trust: Implications for online retail brands," *J. Digit. Mark. Pract.*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 88–101, 2020.
- [16] T. Todor, "Blending traditional and digital marketing," *Bull. Transilv. Univ. Brasov*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 51–56, 2016.
- [17] S. Chatterjee, "Impulsive buying behaviour of young female consumers under social media influence," *South Asian J. Bus. Manag. Cases*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 190–200, 2019.
- [18] R. Duffett, "Influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes," *Young Consum.*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 19–39, 2017.

10.48047/jocaaa.2024.32.01.103

- [19] A. Singh and D. Sailo, "Consumer buying behaviour towards cosmetic products: A study with reference to selected cities in India," *Int. J. Res. Commer. Manag. Stud.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 12–20, 2021.
- [20] Statista, "Digital marketing and e-commerce in India – statistics and facts," Statista Res. Dept., 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://www.statista.com/>