



The Influence Of Social Media Marketing On Youth Cosmetic Purchases: A Study On Visual Content And Influencer Engagement

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Abstract

The growing influence of social media on consumer behaviour has fundamentally reshaped marketing strategies, particularly within the cosmetic industry. This study examines the role of visual content and influencer marketing in shaping youth brand engagement and purchasing behaviour. With the proliferation of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, cosmetic brands are leveraging high-quality visuals and influencer collaborations to connect with younger audiences. The research highlights that visual content, while significant, accounts for a modest portion of brand engagement, suggesting that other factors such as product quality, brand identity, and interactivity are also crucial. Similarly, influencer marketing is shown to have a meaningful, though limited, impact on youth consumer trust and purchase intentions. This study further explores the dynamics of consumer behaviour using established frameworks, emphasizing the interactive nature of social media content and the importance of authenticity in influencer collaborations. Practical implications for marketers in the cosmetic industry are discussed, including recommendations for integrating visual and influencer strategies within a broader digital marketing framework. Finally, the study underscores the need for further research to explore the cultural, demographic, and psychological factors that mediate the effectiveness of social media marketing, particularly in youth-driven markets.

Keywords: Brand engagement, consumer behaviour, cosmetics, digital marketing, influencer marketing, social media marketing, visual content, youth.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The rise of social media platforms has transformed consumer engagement, particularly in the cosmetic industry, where brands use social media marketing to directly connect with the youth demographic. Visual content, such as high-quality images and videos on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, plays a key role in attracting attention, communicating brand values, and showcasing product effectiveness (Kapoor et al., 2021). Additionally, influencer marketing has gained prominence, as influencers with large followings help build trust and relatability, reshaping marketing from mass advertising to targeted, engagement-focused strategies (De Veirman et al., 2017). Understanding how these tactics impact youth cosmetic purchases is crucial, considering their increasing influence and responsiveness to social media trends.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Understanding youth perceptions and purchasing behaviour in response to social media marketing is crucial for the cosmetic industry. Youth, as digital natives, value authenticity, inclusivity, and personalized content, with their social media use driven by information-seeking and peer validation (Smith & Anderson, 2018). This study explores how visual content and influencer marketing influence purchasing decisions and provides practical insights for optimizing social media campaigns to enhance brand engagement and trust. It also addresses gaps in understanding the cultural, social, and psychological factors that shape consumer behaviour, focusing on the tech-savvy youth market in Bangalore Urban.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of social media marketing strategies on youth purchasing decisions in the cosmetic industry. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Analyze the impact of visually driven content on consumer engagement.
2. Examine the role of influencer endorsements in shaping perceptions and purchase intentions.

1.4. Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on youth in Bangalore Urban, a demographic characterized by high digital engagement and diverse consumer preferences. The emphasis on this geographic area allows for an in-depth exploration of how urbanization and digitalization intersect to influence cosmetic consumption patterns. The study includes both male and female respondents to ensure a comprehensive understanding of gendered consumption behaviours, particularly in addressing misconceptions about male cosmetic use.

However, the study's scope is limited by its geographic concentration, which may not fully capture variations across rural or semi-urban populations. Additionally, while social media platforms are diverse, this study primarily examines Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, potentially excluding insights from emerging or niche platforms. Finally, the study relies on self-reported data, which may introduce biases such as social desirability or recall inaccuracies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media Marketing in the Cosmetic Industry

Social media marketing has become essential for cosmetic brands, utilizing visually engaging content and influencer collaborations to connect with consumers. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are ideal for showcasing products through high-resolution images and tutorials, while influencer marketing builds credibility and relatability (Kapoor et al., 2021; De Veirman et al., 2017). Research highlights that influencer authenticity boosts consumer trust

and purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019), and well-curated content strengthens brand recall (Chetioui et al., 2020). However, more research is needed to understand how these strategies interact with cultural and demographic factors, especially in urban youth markets.

2.2. Consumer Behaviour and Purchase Decisions

Consumer behaviour in the cosmetic industry is increasingly influenced by visual content and influencer recommendations, guided by models like AIDA and the Consumer Decision-Making Process. Visual content captures attention, while influencers drive purchase decisions through product demonstrations and testimonials (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Social media marketing fosters emotional connections and perceived value, enhancing consumer engagement through visual and interactive content (Pappas et al.,

2017). User-generated content, such as reviews, further strengthens the persuasive power of campaigns (Chetioui et al., 2020), highlighting the complex factors influencing purchase decisions.

2.3. Youth as a Target Market

Youth are a valuable but complex target market for cosmetic brands, as they prioritize authenticity, inclusivity, and sustainability in purchasing decisions (Kapoor et al., 2021). They respond strongly to influencer endorsements and visually engaging content, seeing influencers as relatable role models (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Social media's interactive features foster community and loyalty, but challenges such as scepticism towards promotional content and privacy concerns persist (Smith & Anderson, 2018). These factors require marketing strategies that balance engagement with authenticity and ethical considerations.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to evaluate the influence of social media marketing strategies on youth cosmetic purchasing decisions. A descriptive approach is used to detail the social media marketing techniques prevalent in the cosmetic industry, while the analytical component critically examines the relationship between visual content, influencer engagement, and brand engagement.

3.2. Study Area

The study focuses on Bangalore Urban, a region recognized for its cosmopolitan nature and tech-savvy youth demographic. Bangalore's prominence as a hub for digital marketing and consumer innovation makes it an ideal location for understanding the interplay between social media and youth purchasing behaviour.

3.3. Population and Sampling

The target population consists of individuals aged 18 to 25 years residing in Bangalore Urban. This age group represents the digital-native generation, characterized by high levels of social media engagement and significant influence in shaping market trends.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure diverse representation across gender, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational levels. A total sample size of 480 respondents was determined to provide statistically robust insights while maintaining manageability for data analysis.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected using structured online questionnaires distributed through social media platforms. The questionnaire was designed to capture insights into participants' social media usage, perceptions of visual content and influencer marketing, and purchasing behaviours.

Additionally, interviews with selected respondents provided qualitative depth to the study, exploring nuanced attitudes and motivations. To supplement the primary data, social media metrics such as likes, shares, and engagement rates on cosmetic-related content were analysed to contextualize consumer behaviour.

3.5. Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Visual inspiration from cosmetic content on social media positively influences brand

engagement with cosmetic brands.

H2: Influencer impact on social media positively influences brand engagement with cosmetic brands.

These hypotheses are grounded in existing literature and aim to establish the significance of visual and influencer-driven marketing strategies in shaping consumer-brand relationships within the cosmetic industry.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

As indicated in Table 1, the gender distribution of the respondents reveals a slight male majority. Out of the total 480 respondents, 55.4% are male (266 respondents), and 44.6% are female (214 respondents). This distribution reflects a balanced representation of genders within the study.

Table 1: Gender profile

Gender	No. of Respondents'	Percent
Male	266	55.4
Female	214	44.6
Total	480	100.0

The nearly even split between male and female respondents highlights that social media marketing strategies in the cosmetic industry are not exclusively targeted at women but also increasingly resonate with male consumers. This underscores the growing importance of gender-neutral marketing in the industry. The data indicates that cosmetic brands need to acknowledge the significant presence of male consumers in their target audience. Developing inclusive marketing strategies that appeal to both genders can enhance engagement and brand loyalty.

As represented in Table 2, the respondents, aged 18 to 25, are evenly distributed across this range. The largest group is 20 years old (21.5%), followed by 21 years old (19.0%). The youngest and oldest age groups, 18 and 25 years, comprise 14.4% and 7.1%, respectively.

Table 2: Age distribution

Age in Years	No. of Respondents'	Percent
18	69	14.4
19	50	10.4
20	103	21.5
21	91	19.0
22	67	14.0
23	32	6.7
24	34	7.1
25	34	7.1
Total	480	100.0

The data reflects a typical representation of youth in the study, capturing diverse age brackets within the target demographic. Younger adults (18-21) form a larger portion, indicating their heightened

engagement with social media. The predominance of younger participants suggests that this demographic is particularly influenced by social media marketing. Brands should tailor their strategies to address the preferences and behaviours of younger adults who are more digitally active.

As per Table 3, family incomes vary across a broad spectrum, with the majority falling between ₹45,000-₹55,000 (19.0%). Other significant groups include those earning over ₹65,000 (17.5%) and less than ₹25,000 (16.7%).

Table 3: Monthly income of the family

In Rupees	Frequency	Percent
< 25000	80	16.7
25000 - 35000	70	14.6
35000 - 45000	75	15.6
45000 - 55000	91	19.0
55000 - 65000	80	16.7
> 65000	84	17.5
Total	480	100.0

The data indicates a diverse socioeconomic background among respondents. This variability suggests that the cosmetic industry's reach spans across different income groups, with luxury and budget-friendly products both having potential audiences. Brands must adopt tiered pricing and product strategies to cater to varying economic capacities. Understanding the economic profile of consumers can aid in optimizing marketing messages and product positioning.

As indicated in Table 4, all 480 respondents reported having active social media accounts, representing 100% of the sample. The universal presence of social media accounts among respondents confirms the platform's significance as a marketing tool for the cosmetic industry. Social media is a primary channel for engaging youth.

Table 4: Presence of active social media accounts among survey respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	480	100.0
No	0	0.0
Total	480	100.0

Given the ubiquity of social media among youth, brands should focus on creating a robust online presence to reach this audience effectively. A digital-first strategy is essential for capturing this demographic.

As indicated in Table 5, Instagram is the most used platform (96.04%), followed by YouTube (53.33%), Snapchat (52.50%), and WhatsApp (51.46%). Facebook and Telegram show lower engagement (50.42%).

Table 5: Distribution of active social media platform usage among survey respondents

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Facebook	242	12.48	50.42
Instagram	461	23.78	96.04
YouTube	256	13.20	53.33
Snapchat	252	13.00	52.50
WhatsApp	247	12.74	51.46
Telegram	242	12.48	50.42
Other	239	12.33	49.79
Total	1939	100.00	403.96

Instagram's dominance reflects its visual-centric appeal, making it the ideal platform for cosmetic brands. Platforms like YouTube and Snapchat also hold relevance due to their video and storytelling capabilities. The findings emphasize the importance of visual content in influencing youth. Brands should prioritize platforms like Instagram and YouTube for impactful marketing campaigns, leveraging videos, stories, and influencer partnerships.

As per Table 6, the majority of respondents (44.2%) use social media multiple times a day. Others engage less frequently, with 17.5% using it once a day and another 17.5% engaging occasionally. High daily engagement underscores the critical role of social media in the lives of youth. The consistent interaction suggests ample opportunities for brands to interact with their audience.

Table 6: Frequency of social media usage on a typical day among survey respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Multiple times a day	212	44.2
Once a day	84	17.5
Several times a week	82	17.1
Occasionally	84	17.5
Rarely	18	3.8
Total	480	100.0

Frequent social media usage indicates a high potential for targeted marketing. Brands must strategically time their posts to coincide with peak user activity.

As indicated in Table 7, a significant majority (90.0%) use social media for beauty and cosmetic-related content, while 10.0% do not.

Table 7: Utilization of social media platforms for purchasing beauty and cosmetic-related content

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	432	90.0
No	48	10.0
Total	480	100.0

The high usage rate highlights the reliance of youth on social media for exploring cosmetic products. This reinforces the importance of a strong digital marketing presence. Brands should consistently post engaging and informative content to capture and retain the attention of their target audience. Social proof, reviews, and influencer endorsements are critical drivers.

As per Table 8, Instagram is the most preferred platform (29.79%), followed by Facebook (23.33%) and YouTube (16.67%). Other platforms have minimal engagement.

Table 8: Preference for social media platforms for beauty and cosmetic-related content consumption

	Frequency	Percent
Instagram	143	29.79
Facebook	112	23.33
YouTube	80	16.67
Snapchat	40	8.33
WhatsApp	43	8.96
Telegram	35	7.29
Other	27	5.63
Total	480	100.0

Instagram's dominance for cosmetic content underscores its suitability for visually appealing campaigns. Facebook and YouTube also provide opportunities for video and community-based marketing. Given Instagram's appeal, brands should focus on leveraging its features, such as reels and stories, to promote products. Diversifying efforts on Facebook and YouTube can further enhance reach.

As per Table 9, most respondents moderately (23.3%) or slightly (22.3%) trust social media recommendations. Frequent engagement (21.9%) is common, with rare interactions being minimal (19.4%). Respondents occasionally post (23.3%) or engage (20.8%) with cosmetic-related content. Moderate to strong impact is reported by 42.7% of respondents.

Table 9: Social media engagement and influence on beauty and cosmetic-related content consumption

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
To what extent do you trust product recommendations or reviews shared by others on social media for beauty and cosmetic-related content and products?	Not at all	88	18.3%
	Slightly	107	22.3%
	Moderately	112	23.3%
	Very much	87	18.1%
	Completely	86	17.9%
	Total	480	100.0%
How often do you engage with beauty influencer content through likes, comments, or shares for beauty and cosmetic-related content and products?	Rarely	93	19.4%
	Occasionally	89	18.5%
	Sometime	99	20.6%
	Frequently	94	19.6%
	Very frequently	105	21.9%
	Total	480	100.0%
How frequently do you post content or engage with others on social media platforms for	Rarely	92	19.2%
	Occasionally	112	23.3%
	Sometime	81	16.9%
	Frequently	100	20.8%

beauty and cosmetic-related content and products?	Very frequently	95	19.8%
	Total	480	100.0%
To what extent does following a brand or business on social media impact your perception and interest on beauty and cosmetic-related content and products?	No impact	88	18.3%
	Slight impact	98	20.4%
	Moderate impact	101	21.0%
	Significant impact	89	18.5%
	Strong impact	104	21.7%
	Total	480	100.0%

The findings reveal varied levels of trust and engagement with social media content. While influencers play a significant role, personal interactions and brand following also impact perceptions. To build trust, brands should collaborate with credible influencers and focus on authentic storytelling. Engaging content and interactive campaigns can foster stronger consumer-brand relationships.

Table 10 presents descriptive statistics related to three key factors influencing youth cosmetic purchases on social media: Visual Inspiration, Brand Engagement, and Influencer Impact. These factors were evaluated based on their mean and standard deviation values across different statements that represent the influence of visual content, brand interaction, and influencer recommendations.

Table 10: Descriptive statistics of visual inspiration, brand engagement and influencer impact

Code	Factor	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
viin_1	Visual Inspiration	The visual content shared by beauty influencers on social media inspires me to experiment with different makeup looks and beauty styles.	3.38	1.373
viin_2		I am motivated to try new cosmetic and beauty products based on the creative visuals shared on social media.	3.41	1.378
viin_3		The visual aesthetics of cosmetic brands' social media accounts influence my interest in their products.	3.39	1.377
bren_1	Brand Engagement	I actively engage with cosmetic brands' social media accounts to stay updated about new product launches and promotions.	3.30	1.446
bren_2		Following cosmetic brands on social media makes me feel more connected to their products and values.	3.33	1.412
bren_3		Interacting with cosmetic brands' social media content makes me more likely to consider their products for purchase.	3.30	1.420
bren_4		I find it enjoyable to participate in cosmetic brands' social media contests and giveaways.	3.27	1.434
inim_1		Beauty influencers' recommendations on social media have a strong influence on my decision to buy cosmetic and beauty products.	3.26	1.342

inim_2	I trust the product reviews and recommendations shared by beauty influencers on social media.	3.30	1.346
inim_3	Beauty influencers' makeup tutorials and demonstrations influence my perception of cosmetic products.	3.31	1.349
inim_4	I am more likely to buy a cosmetic product if it is endorsed by a beauty influencer I follow on social media.	3.29	1.354

Visual Inspiration factors highlight the role of aesthetic content in motivating youth to experiment with beauty products and styles. The statements related to *Visual Inspiration* focus on how creative and visually appealing content shared by beauty influencers can spark interest in trying new products. The mean scores for these statements range from 3.38 to 3.41, indicating a moderate level of agreement with the idea that visual content influences their decision to explore new makeup looks and cosmetic brands. The standard deviations (ranging from 1.373 to 1.378) suggest some variation in responses, but the overall trend reflects that visual aesthetics are indeed an important factor in driving interest.

Brand Engagement factors explore the connection youth feel towards cosmetic brands via their social media presence. Statements related to *Brand Engagement* reveal that youth actively engage with brands by following them, staying updated on promotions, and participating in contests. Mean scores for these factors range from 3.27 to 3.33, showing a consistent, albeit moderate, inclination to engage with cosmetic brands online. The relatively higher standard deviations (ranging from 1.412 to 1.446) indicate that while engagement is present, it is not uniform across all individuals.

Influencer Impact factors examine the influence of beauty influencers on purchasing behaviour. The statements related to *Influencer Impact* suggest that influencers have a noticeable effect on the youth's cosmetic choices, with mean scores ranging from 3.26 to 3.31. This suggests that influencers, through recommendations, reviews, tutorials, and endorsements, significantly impact purchasing decisions. The standard deviations (ranging from 1.342 to 1.354) reveal some variation in the degree of influence but generally confirm the persuasive power of influencers in shaping consumer preferences.

Table 10 highlights that social media marketing, especially through visual content and influencer engagement, significantly influences youth cosmetic purchases. While there is variability in the strength of these influences, the overall impact of social media marketing on youth consumer behaviour in cosmetics is undeniable, with influencers playing a particularly central role in shaping purchasing decisions.

4.2. Impact of Visual Content

Table 11, 12 and 13 examine the impact of visual inspiration on brand engagement, providing statistical insights into the relationship between the visual content shared by beauty influencers and youth interaction with cosmetic brands on social media. Visual content, such as makeup tutorials, product demonstrations, and creative visuals, is a key element in attracting and engaging potential consumers, especially the youth demographic. By analyzing the model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficients, this section offers a deeper understanding of how visual inspiration influences brand engagement.

Table 11: Model Summary of impact of visual inspiration on brand engagement

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.238 ^a	.057	.055	1.28710

Table 11: Model Summary presents the model fit statistics for the relationship between visual inspiration and brand engagement. The R-value of 0.238 indicates a low positive correlation between the two variables, while the R Square value of 0.057 shows that only 5.7% of the variance in brand engagement is explained by visual inspiration. The Adjusted R Square value (0.055) and the Std. Error of the Estimate (1.28710) suggest that, while visual inspiration has an effect, it accounts for a small portion of the variability in brand engagement, with some unexplained error.

Table 12: ANOVA of impact of visual inspiration on brand engagement

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	47.600	1	47.600	28.733	.000 ^b
Residual	791.868	478	1.657		
Total	839.468	479			

Table 12: ANOVA evaluates the significance of the regression model. The F-statistic of 28.733 is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the model is a good fit and that visual inspiration significantly influences brand engagement. The residual sum of squares (791.868) and the total sum of squares (839.468) show that there is variation in brand engagement that is not explained by visual inspiration, reinforcing the limited impact of this factor.

Table 13: Regression coefficient of impact of visual inspiration on brand engagement

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.482	.156		15.917	.000
Visual Inspiration	.231	.043	.238	5.360	.000

Table 13: Regression Coefficient provides the coefficients for the regression analysis, which quantifies the impact of visual inspiration on brand engagement. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for visual inspiration is 0.231, meaning that for each unit increase in visual inspiration, brand engagement is expected to increase by 0.231 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.238 indicates a small but statistically significant effect. The t-value of 5.360 and the p-value of 0.000 confirm that visual inspiration is a significant predictor of brand engagement.

Thus, visual inspiration is an important factor in driving brand engagement, its limited explanatory power suggests that other components of social media marketing, such as influencer credibility and interactivity, likely play a more significant role in shaping youth perceptions and actions toward cosmetic brands. Therefore, cosmetic brands should consider integrating visual inspiration with other engagement strategies to foster stronger relationships with their youth audience.

4.3. Influencer Impact

Table 14, 15 and 16 into the statistical analysis of the influence of beauty influencers on brand engagement, particularly focusing on the role of influencer impact. As influencers play a central role in shaping purchasing decisions through social media, understanding their effect on brand engagement is crucial. The following tables provide insights into how influencer impact contributes to brand engagement, utilizing model summary statistics, ANOVA, and regression coefficients to assess the strength and significance of this relationship.

Table 14: Model Summary of influencer impact on brand engagement

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.206 ^a	.043	.041	1.29668

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Impact

Table 14: Model Summary presents the model fit for influencer impact on brand engagement. The R-value of 0.206 suggests a weak positive relationship between influencer impact and brand engagement. The R Square value of 0.043 indicates that influencer impact explains only 4.3% of the variance in brand engagement, while the Adjusted R Square (0.041) and the Std. Error of the Estimate (1.29668) show a similar level of model performance, indicating some unexplained variation in the data.

Table 15: ANOVA of influencer impact on brand engagement

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	35.772	1	35.772	21.275	.000 ^b
Residual	803.696	478	1.681		
Total	839.468	479			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Impact

Table 15: ANOVA evaluates the overall significance of the regression model. The F- statistic of 21.275 is significant with a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that the model is statistically significant. This means that influencer impact has a meaningful effect on brand engagement, although the relatively small R Square value suggests that the effect is modest. The residual sum of squares (803.696) and total sum of squares (839.468) further indicate that there is significant unexplained variation in brand engagement.

Table 16: Regression coefficient of influencer impact on brand engagement

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.620	.150		17.446	.000
Influencer Impact	.198	.043	.206	4.613	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement

Table 16: Regression Coefficient outlines the specific contribution of influencer impact on brand engagement. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for influencer impact is 0.198, meaning that for each unit increase in influencer impact, brand engagement is expected to increase by 0.198 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.206 indicates a small but significant positive effect. The t-value of 4.613 and the p-value of 0.000 further support the conclusion that influencer impact is a statistically significant predictor of brand engagement.

The influencer impact does contribute to brand engagement, its relatively small effect size (as indicated by the R Square and Beta values) suggests that cosmetic brands should not solely rely on influencer marketing. Rather, they should integrate influencer partnerships with other elements of their social media strategy, such as visual content, customer interactions, and promotions, to foster deeper and more sustained engagement with their youth audience.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Findings

The findings from the regression and ANOVA analyses, as presented in Tables 11-16, highlight the nuanced relationship between social media marketing elements—specifically visual content and influencer impact—and youth brand engagement in the cosmetic industry. These findings provide an empirical basis to link the results with existing literature on the influence of visual aesthetics and influencers on consumer behaviour.

Visual Content and Brand Engagement: The results from Tables 11, 12, and 13 shows that visual inspiration has a statistically significant, yet modest, impact on brand engagement. The R Square value of 0.057 suggests that visual content accounts for only a small proportion of the variation in engagement, aligning with earlier studies that emphasize the importance of visual stimuli in digital marketing (e.g., Kozinets et al., 2010). The influence of visual inspiration, although significant ($p < 0.001$), indicates that it is not the sole driver of brand engagement. This supports previous research by Scholz and Smith (2017), who suggest that while visual content plays a pivotal role in attracting attention, it must be integrated with other elements such as product quality, brand identity, and interactive features to foster deeper consumer engagement.

Influencer Impact and Brand Engagement: Similarly, the findings from Tables 14, 15, and 16 demonstrate that influencer impact significantly influences brand engagement (Beta = 0.206), though the effect size is relatively small (R Square = 0.043). The significance of influencer recommendations corroborates the established theory of social influence in consumer decision-making (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). Influencers, particularly in the beauty sector, are seen as trusted sources who shape consumer perceptions and purchase intentions through their endorsements. However, the modest explanatory power of influencer impact in this study suggests that influencer marketing should not be relied upon in isolation. This is in line with views by De Veirman et al. (2017), who argue that influencer effectiveness is contingent upon factors such as authenticity and the perceived fit between the influencer and the brand.

Thus, while visual content and influencer endorsements do significantly contribute to brand engagement, the relatively low explanatory power (as evidenced by the R Square values) suggests that their impact is constrained without complementary marketing strategies. These findings challenge the notion of influencer marketing as a panacea and underscore the complexity of consumer engagement in the digital age.

5.2. Practical Implications

Recommendations for Marketers to Leverage Social Media Effectively: The results of this study offer valuable insights for marketers in the cosmetic industry seeking to optimize their social media strategies. Given the modest but significant influence of both visual content and influencers on brand engagement, marketers must integrate these elements within a broader, more comprehensive digital marketing framework. The key takeaway for marketers is to use visual content not only to capture attention but also to convey the brand's identity and values. High-quality, aesthetically pleasing visuals can spark interest, but it is essential that these visuals resonate with the target audience's preferences and aspirations.

Moreover, marketers should recognize that influencer partnerships are an effective, though supplementary, tool for driving engagement. While influencers hold significant sway over youth purchasing decisions, their effectiveness hinges on credibility, trust, and alignment with brand values. Marketers must carefully select influencers whose persona and content are in harmony with the brand, ensuring that endorsements feel authentic and relatable.

Strategies to Enhance Visual Appeal and Influencer Partnerships: To enhance visual appeal, cosmetic brands should focus on creating diverse, high-quality visual content that showcases product usage, tutorials, and user-generated content. Leveraging formats such as Instagram Stories, TikTok videos, and interactive posts can engage youth consumers more dynamically. Additionally, brands should experiment with user-generated content campaigns, encouraging followers to share their own makeup looks using specific products. This not only amplifies engagement but also fosters a sense of community around the brand, as supported by the findings on brand engagement in the study.

Regarding influencer partnerships, marketers should prioritize long-term collaborations over one-off promotions to build sustained engagement and authenticity. Influencers should be involved in co-creating content that feels natural and aligned with the brand's narrative. Additionally, marketers should explore micro-influencers, who often possess higher levels of engagement with niche audiences. Research by Lou and Yuan (2019) suggests that smaller influencers tend to have more authentic relationships with their followers, which could result in higher trust and, ultimately, greater purchase intent.

In conclusion, while the findings from this study underscore the importance of both visual content and influencers in shaping brand engagement, they also highlight the need for a multi-faceted approach. Cosmetic brands must integrate these elements with broader marketing strategies, leveraging the synergy between aesthetic appeal, influencer credibility, and interactive consumer engagement to drive deeper connections with youth audiences.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Summary of Key Findings

This research has provided critical insights into the influence of social media marketing, specifically focusing on visual content and influencer impact, on youth cosmetic purchases. The findings suggest that while both elements significantly contribute to brand engagement, their individual effects are modest in magnitude. Visual content, as demonstrated by the regression analysis, has a statistically significant effect on brand engagement, but the overall explanatory power is limited. This supports the argument that while aesthetic appeal plays a role in attracting attention, it is not sufficient on its own to drive deep consumer engagement or purchase intent. Similarly, influencer marketing, although influential, shows a similar pattern, with a moderate effect on brand engagement. These findings reinforce the theory that influencer marketing, while effective, should not be relied upon in isolation but integrated into a more comprehensive and multidimensional marketing strategy.

The low R Square values observed in both visual inspiration and influencer impact models (0.057 and 0.043, respectively) indicate that while these factors influence engagement, they account for only a small portion of the total variance in consumer behaviour. This suggests that other variables, such as product quality, brand loyalty, and customer service, likely play a more significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions.

6.2. Recommendations for the Cosmetic Industry

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for cosmetic brands seeking to optimize their social media strategies:

1. **Enhance Visual Content Quality and Relevance:** Marketers should invest in creating visually appealing and relevant content that aligns with the aesthetic preferences and values of their target audience. While the study finds that visual content influences brand engagement, the impact is limited if the content does not resonate with the youth's desire for authenticity and self-expression. Brands should focus on creating

content that not only showcases products but also communicates a brand narrative that appeals to the aspirations of youth. Interactive formats, such as tutorials, product demonstrations, and user-generated content, can increase engagement by creating a sense of community and involvement.

2. **Leverage Influencer Relationships for Authentic Engagement:** Given the influence of beauty influencers, brands should prioritize long-term, authentic partnerships rather than short-term promotional deals. Influencers, particularly those with a high level of credibility and relatability, can significantly enhance brand perception when they genuinely align with the brand's values. However, it is crucial that influencer collaborations feel natural and authentic, as consumers, especially youth, are increasingly sceptical of overtly commercialized endorsements. Additionally, brands should consider working with micro-influencers who often engage with more niche, loyal audiences, ensuring that their campaigns feel less like advertisements and more like trusted recommendations.
3. **Integrate Visual and Influencer Marketing:** To maximize brand engagement, cosmetic companies should create integrated campaigns that combine both high-quality visual content and influencer partnerships. These elements should be strategically aligned, with influencers involved in the creation and sharing of visual content that resonates with their followers. This collaborative approach could enhance the authenticity of the marketing message, resulting in higher levels of consumer trust and deeper engagement.

6.3. Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of visual content and influencers in shaping brand engagement in the cosmetic industry, several avenues for future research remain.

1. **Expanding to Other Regions or Age Groups:** This research is limited to a specific demographic (youth) and geographic context. Future studies could explore the influence of social media marketing on different age groups, particularly older consumers who may have different preferences and consumption patterns. Additionally, expanding the study to other regions or cultural contexts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visual content and influencer marketing influence consumer behaviour across diverse populations. Cultural variations in the perception of beauty and cosmetics could also offer unique insights into how social media marketing strategies need to be tailored for different markets.
2. **Exploring the Long-Term Effects of Social Media Marketing Strategies:** Another promising direction for future research is to explore the long-term impact of social media marketing on consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of brand loyalty and sustained engagement. While this study focused on immediate brand engagement, understanding how social media marketing influences long-term purchase decisions and brand loyalty could provide valuable insights for brands looking to build lasting relationships with consumers. Longitudinal studies could track how social media exposure and influencer marketing shape purchasing habits over time, offering a more robust understanding of the enduring effects of these marketing strategies.

In conclusion, while visual content and influencer engagement significantly influence brand engagement in the cosmetic industry, they should be viewed as part of a larger marketing strategy. By combining these elements with a focus on authenticity, brand values, and a deeper understanding of target consumers, cosmetic brands can create more effective and sustainable social media campaigns. Future research should continue to explore the evolving landscape of social media marketing, particularly its long-term effects and cross-cultural applicability.

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