Assessing the role of perceived quality and brand elements in shaping Indian consumers' purchase intentions for cosmetic skincare products

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how perceived quality and brand features influence consumer purchase intentions for skincare products in the global cosmetics sector. Specifically, it explores the impact of perceived quality, brand awareness, brand affiliation, and brand loyalty on purchasing intention. The study employs a mall intercept method to collect data from 178 cosmetic buyers in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Respondents from brands like Colorbar, Dove, Himalaya, Lakme, Nivea, Ponds, Boutique, Calorescence, Elle 18, L'Oreal, Lotus, and VLCC completed a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical approaches, with convenience sampling (mall intercept method) applied. The study finds a positive correlation between perceived quality, brand awareness, brand affiliation, and brand loyalty with skincare product purchase intentions. Notably, perceived quality is identified as a strong influence on consumer buying intentions. The results highlight that factors such as price, performance, value, brand, and service design are key drivers of consumer purchasing decisions. Perceived quality, along with brand-related factors, significantly affects consumer intentions to purchase skincare cosmetics. Marketers should focus on enhancing these aspects to boost brand performance and consumer loyalty. The findings provide valuable insights for scholars and brand managers in the cosmetics industry. Understanding the interplay of quality, awareness, loyalty, and affiliation can help in developing effective brand management strategies, ensuring a competitive advantage and improved customer retention in a crowded market.

1. Introduction

The worldwide pandemic that struck in 2020 had adverse effects on numerous sectors and industries, particularly the beauty sector. In 2019, the global beauty industry was valued at approximately USD 500 billion, with forecasts suggesting sustained expansion in the forthcoming years. Nevertheless, the epidemic hindered the sector and its potential for growth. Global lockdowns resulted in the closure of luxury beauty product retailers, with around 30% of the beauty market ceasing operations, and several enterprises failing to reopen. Nonetheless, the industry has exhibited resilience and is progressively recovering. The beauty industry, including skincare, haircare, perfumes, and cosmetics, is anticipated to experience an annual growth rate of 5% from 2020 to 2023[1]. China, the US, Japan, India, and Brazil are expected to continue being the leading beauty markets globally. In a complex global landscape, the cosmetics industry saw a robust rebound in 2021, reaching levels comparable to those of 2019. The promising growth potential in consumer demand is fueled by the increasing middle and upper-income groups, a rising senior population, and a growing urban demographic.

The valuation of the Indian cosmetics market was approximated at USD 13,191.23 million in FY2020, with projections indicating an increase to USD 28,985.33 million by FY2026, reflecting a robust double-digit CAGR of 16.39%. The expected growth of the market can be attributed to an increase in disposable income, thereby enhancing individuals' purchasing capacity. An additional significant element expected to drive the cosmetics market in the forthcoming period is the expansion of online retail alongside the increasing inclination of younger demographics towards skincare and various grooming products. Moreover, there exists a significant demand for cosmetics, driven by increasing consumer awareness and a preference for acquiring innovative skincare products that enhance their skin type while simultaneously contributing to their aesthetic appeal. According to India's Association of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), the beauty, cosmetics, and grooming market in India is projected to expand from its current value of $6.5 billion to $20 billion by 2025, driven by increasing disposable income among the middle class and growing aspirations for a better lifestyle and appearance.

FMCG companies are introducing a diverse range of products across different price segments to accommodate consumers with varying purchasing capacities. Teenagers' use of cosmetics increased significantly among 2005 - 2015 due to growing consciousness and appeal to look good. For companies that produce a variety of goods, including body sprays, this product category is actually one of the fastest-growing market niches. More than 68 percent of young adults believe that their confidence is increased by using grooming products. Approximately 62% of young consumers in metropolitan areas prefer buying beauty and grooming products online, while 45% opt to purchase clothing and cosmetics from multiple stores instead of being loyal to a single one. Customers prioritize both quality and affordability. As per an ASSOCHAM study, brands like L'Oreal, Nivea, Maybelline, Lakme, and Colour Bar are being positioned as mass-market products, targeting younger women and those with limited purchasing power. Although these products are relatively affordable, both consumers and manufacturers are overcoming traditional price constraints[2].

The herbal cosmetics sector is propelling expansion in the Indian beauty market, with a forecast increase of 12 percent. The Indian cosmetics sector features numerous herbal cosmetic brands, including Forest Essentials, Himalaya, Biotique, Blossom Kochhar, VLCC, Dabur, and Lotus, among others. The cosmetic skincare sector in India has expanded dramatically over the last decade, owing to rising disposable incomes, increased awareness of personal grooming, and the influence of social media. Indian consumers today demand skincare products that are high-quality, effective, and compatible with their personal preferences and values. Perceived quality, or a subjective assessment of a product's overall superiority, has a significant impact on consumer behavior. Component authenticity, safety standards, product efficacy, and compliance with consumer wants all have an impact on perceived quality in the cosmetics sector. Indian customers are particularly concerned with product quality, driven by cultural standards that favor natural beauty and a predilection for herbal and Ayurvedic remedies.

In India, adding emotional and cultural appeals to brand elements can help people develop strong connections. Brands that employ the words "natural" or "herbal" in their messaging are very appealing to Indian consumers. In a market

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[1]https://www.aranca.com/knowledge-library/articles/business-research/emerging-trends-in-beauty-industry-in-2021
[2]https://www.ibef.org/news/personal-care-market-to-touch-us-20-billion-in-india-by-2025

saturated with counterfeit and inferior items, established brand names must preserve consumer trust. Indian customers combine their traditional and contemporary interests. Global beauty trends and high-end skincare products are impacting urban consumers, who value the authenticity and efficacy of herbal or natural ingredients. Cost, formulations tailored to specific skin types, and the product's connection with personal or social objectives (for example, sustainability and cruelty-free methods) can all influence purchasing decisions. The preferences and demands of modern adolescent Indian men are evolving quickly. With rising disposable incomes, they are becoming more selective and willing to indulge in grooming products.

Despite the growing relevance of perceived quality and brand attributes in influencing customer behavior, considerable gaps exist in the existing research. Western markets dominate most research on perceived quality and brand attributes, leaving a gap in understanding the distinct tastes, cultural influences, and purchasing intentions of Indian customers. While researchers examine perceived quality and brand attributes independently, they pay less attention to how these factors interact and influence customer choices. The Indian market is highly fragmented, with notable disparities in consumer behavior between urban and rural locations, income levels, and age demographics.

The rise of e-commerce and social media influencers has increased Indian customers' awareness of international products and trends. Nonetheless, there has been little research on how these evolving methods influence perceptions of quality and brand loyalty. When it comes to purchasing decisions, today's consumers place a higher weight on environmental and ethical principles. The research studies have not adequately explored how these factors influence perceived quality and brand trust in the Indian cosmetics market. A greater understanding of how perceived quality and brand features influence purchase intentions would allow businesses to modify their strategies to suit the expectations of Indian consumers. It will offer insights into creating effective marketing strategies, enhancing product formulas, and establishing brand equity in a competitive and dynamic business.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine how consumers' intentions to purchase skincare products are influenced by David Aaker's brand equity dimensions, including perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty. Specifically, this research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do perceived quality shape consumer purchase intentions in the Indian skincare market?
2. What role does brand elements play in influencing consumer preferences for skincare products in Indian market?

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the role of perceived quality in shape consumer purchase intentions in the Indian skincare market?
2. To assess role of brand elements such as brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty in influencing consumer purchase intentions for Indian skincare market?

This remaining paper is structured as follows: the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a literature review, exploring existing studies on brand equity, perceived quality, and consumer behavior, with a particular focus on the Indian cosmetics market. Section 3 describes the research methodology, outlining the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques employed in this study. Section 4 focuses on data analysis, presenting a detailed examination of the data and key results derived from the study. Section 5 discusses the results and findings in depth, summarizing the research insights and providing actionable strategies for businesses to enhance their brand equity while catering to evolving consumer demands. Finally, Section 6 concludes the study by summarizing its key contributions, identifying limitations, and offering recommendations for future research directions.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Perceived Quality and Purchase intentions

Purchase intentions demonstrate an individual consumer's willingness to engage in purchasing behaviour, indicating their interest in the goods and their quality. Experts view this as a critical factor that shapes their behaviour. According to numerous studies, buyers' inclination to purchase extra green cosmetic items influences their intention to purchase green cosmetic products [1]. According to Rojšek [2] purchasing eco-friendly products demonstrates a consumer's desire to protect or save the environment [2]. Fraj and Martinez measure the intention to purchase green cosmetic items by examining the acquisition of green products, the shift to green brands, and the selection of green product variants [3]. Nonetheless, researchers have not reached an agreement on the impact of product knowledge on purchase intentions. Agreeing to Hagger, et al. [4] intention characterizes an individual's immediate inclination to perform a particular behaviour and serves as an indicator of their motivation to engage in that behaviour [4].

Purchase intention is a significant topic in marketing and academic literature; researchers examine and interpret purchase intention through various methodologies. Mirabi, et al. [5] describe purchase intention as a multifaceted process linked to consumer behaviour, perceptions, and attitudes, acting as a dependable predictor of the buying decision [5]. According to Armstrong and Kotler, purchase intention develops before the consumer makes the final purchasing decision [6]. The intention to purchase can be viewed as dependent on the consumer's preparedness to obtain a specific product or service within defined conditions. Dehghani and Tumer [7] contend that the intention to purchase is a variable shaped by a multitude of external and internal factors, including price, perceived quality, and value [7].

Purchase intention examines to a consumer's inclination to acquire a product or service. In other words, purchase intention encompasses an additional dimension wherein the consumer decides to acquire a product following assessment. Grounded on Keller [8] study a numerous factors influence customer intentions during product selection, and the final decision is contingent upon these intentions alongside significant external circumstances Keller [8]. The decision-making process about purchases is influenced by the group involved in the brand selection for familiar products. The choice of a brand is influenced by the group's cohesion toward that brand [9]. The information regarding the brand utilized by other

group members also influences the decision to forgo the current brand in favour of purchasing the brands employed by other group members [10]. Consumer orientation among group members has a notable impact on the purchasing decisions of others regarding specific brands used by different members [11]. Various factors contribute to purchase intention, such as consumer knowledge, perception, product packaging or design, and endorsements by celebrities [12].

According to Chen and Chang [13] perceived quality increases the perceived value of a product, which is defined as the trade-off between advantages and costs. High perceived value strengthens the consumer's intent to buy. Perceived quality reduces perceived risks, such as financial or performance risk, which increases purchasing intentions [13]. This is especially true in online shopping scenarios, where customers rely substantially on quality indications such as ratings and certificates [14]. Perceived quality in the cosmetics industry is frequently associated with factors such as product effectiveness, packaging, and ingredient transparency. According to studies conducted in 2023, brands that emphasize natural and sustainable products witnessed an increase in purchase intentions. Chee, et al. [15] examines factors influencing brand equity in the bubble milk tea industry in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Their research finds that brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association significantly impact brand equity, with perceived quality being the most influential factor [15]. A study by Hoo, et al. [16] offers practical insights for businesses to prioritize perceived quality in their marketing strategies to gain a competitive edge, particularly when resources are limited [16].

As per the research of TUNG, et al. [17] concludes that a higher perceived value results in a stronger intention to purchase. The perceived value of a product encompasses both tangible and intangible qualities [17]. According to Sun, et al. [18] elucidates that an increased perceived value enhances the buying decision. Consumers evaluate the goods and make decisions based on their knowledge of it. Chang and Wildt [19] asserts that purchasing intention positively correlates with perceived value. Perceived quality is a crucial factor influencing purchasing intentions across several businesses. By comprehending the mediating and moderating variables, companies can formulate focused initiatives to improve consumer perceptions and stimulate sales [19].

2.2. Brand Awareness

Cui, et al. [20] assert that the brand plays a crucial role in customers' decision-making processes influenced by marketing. A favourable brand image may substantially impact customers' purchase intentions. Purchasing a reputable brand may enable customers to reduce the time spent searching for items Cui, et al. [20]. Awan [21] assert that brands can facilitate customers in executing more accurate and uncomplicated product searches Awan [21]. Hoo, et al. [16] contends that brands represent the quality and standards available in the market, hence aiding clients in mitigating their perceived risk Hoo, et al. [22]. Cui, et al. [20] asserts that consumers' purchasing intents are shaped by their comprehensive assessments of the quality levels that each company achieves in relation to customer expectations Cui, et al. [20]. Keller [23] defined brand awareness as the consumer's ability to distinguish a brand across several contexts. He observed that brand awareness is cultivated and enhanced by familiarity with the brand, stemming from repeated exposure, which ultimately leads to customer interaction with the brand. A consumer's interaction with a certain brand can be shaped by auditory, visual, or cognitive engagement with the brand, all of which will enhance the brand's retention in their memory Keller [24].

Barreda, et al. [25] define "brand awareness" as a concept encompassing individual recognition, market dominance, and brand recall [25]. Keller [23] defines brand awareness as the extent to which a consumer recognizes the unique attributes and image of a specific brand Keller [23]. Research by Liu, et al. [26] indicates that brand awareness positively influences brand selection, market share, customer retention, and profit margins Liu, et al. [26]. Yoo, et al. [27] assert that brand communication positively influences brand equity, provided it meets consumer satisfaction relative to non-branded products. Furthermore, contact positively influences clients; hence, communication enhances an individual's familiarity with the brand Yoo and Lee [28]. Yoo and Lee [28] assert that traditional marketing significantly enhances brand quality, loyalty, associations, and awareness [28].

Previous research indicates that brand awareness correlates with brand recall, defined as a customer's ability to readily remember the brand following discussions about its attributes [29]. Moreover, brand awareness pertains to the recognition of the brand with the specific quality of the products given. Valentini et al. assert that customers will have recognized the benefits, attributes, and advantages that the products signify in the market. These are the elements that business organizations signify to the market. A high level of brand awareness is a means to achieve heightened consciousness. In comparison to competing products in the market, customers will consistently recall brands based on the usefulness they provide Valentini, et al. [30]. Sprott, et al. [31] research indicates that customers with buy intentions arising from brand awareness must undergo a distinct decision-making process prior to acting Sprott, et al. [31]. Business enterprises must ensure that messages reach the appropriate target market to enhance brand awareness, as noted by Chakraborty [29]. Valentini et al assert that product communication must provide information regarding the benefits, characteristics, and advantages of the things. Furthermore, affirmative communication regarding brand awareness may motivate the buyer to pursue the products [30].

The customer's interest will drive them to explore the brands and products accessible. Hassan, et al. [32] noted that customers may inquire about companies and products using their social media accounts. Jaiyeoba, et al. [33] assert that consumers with a robust brand awareness exhibit a heightened propensity to purchase products, as they possess adequate knowledge regarding the brand's attributes, the products, and the commitments made by the brand [33]. Customers' pronounced aspirations significantly influence their purchasing intentions. Previous research indicates that brand awareness significantly influences customers' buying intentions Jaiyeoba, et al. [33]. Chakraborty [29] asserts that any material disseminated by corporate entities or brand managers should focus on how customers can enhance their familiarity with the

brands they contemplate acquiring. The purchasing decision process should be structured to enable buyers to easily compare and evaluate the distinct features and unique selling propositions of the products Chakraborty [29]. Kim and Hyun [34] assert that effective brand awareness facilitates the expansion of market share and business growth for firms, hence enhancing their consumer market presence Kim and Hyun [34]. Jaiyeoba, et al. [33] assert that it will also facilitate the firm's survival and guarantee its continued presence in the market [33].

Although numerous prior researchers have identified a significant correlation between brand awareness and purchase intentions, few investigations have explored this link specifically within the cosmetics business. Valentini, et al. [30] assert that enhancing brand recognition can be achieved by assertive advertising messaging, participation in events, or sponsorships. Should such an occurrence transpire, the brand's presentation will enhance, potentially resulting in heightened visibility Valentini, et al. [30]. Abd Razaka, et al. [35] assert that most clientele currently utilize social media as their principal communication means. Consequently, commercial entities may opt to employ social media. Nonetheless, as long as the objectives of the communications are to convey information regarding the products and their advantages, any communication style can effectively enhance brand awareness [35].

2.3. Brand Loyalty

It is regarded as one of the most significant and essential characteristics of a successful brand. It signifies fidelity to one's preferred brand or brands. In other words, brand loyalty is enhanced by being a devoted consumer of that brand. Brand interest, purchase intent, and preference serve as indications of a brand's establishment in the perceptions of customers and businesses [36]. Various research studies indicate that customers' brand perceptions are shaped by their attitudes about the brand [37, 38].

This study demonstrates that several characteristics are associated with brand loyalty. These characteristics are affected and influenced by brand loyalty. Researchers have been interested in brand loyalty for numerous decades [39-41]. Loyalty is widely acknowledged as a brand asset in which companies invest to safeguard and enhance [42]. Therefore, marketers must comprehend the elements associated with varying degrees of brand loyalty Trinh and Dawes [43]. Aaker [42] asserts that brand loyalty is evident when consumers demonstrate a reduced inclination to transition to a different brand, especially in response to changes in pricing or product attributes Aaker [44]. Oliver, et al. [45] articulates brand loyalty as the steadfast commitment to consistently purchase or engage with a preferred product or service over an extended period, irrespective of marketing tactics or external factors that might encourage a shift to another brand Oliver, et al. [45] . Yi and La [46] characterized brand loyalty as the relationship between customer satisfaction with a brand and their propensity to engage in repeated purchases from that brand [46]. Brand loyalty refers to the tendency of consumers to consistently prefer a specific brand when making purchasing decisions, as observed by Amine [47].

Brand loyalty can be analyzed through three distinct lenses: behavioral, attitude, and decision [48]. The evaluation of a customer's inclinations and attitudes towards a brand is conducted from an attitudinal standpoint, while the frequency of purchases for that brand is analyzed through a behavioral lens, and the underlying motivations for a purchase or decision are examined from a choice perspective. Rossiter [49] argued that a positive attitude towards a brand and the constant purchase of that brand are common signs of brand loyalty Rossiter [49] however, Oliver primarily emphasized the behavioral aspect of brand loyalty Oliver, et al. [45]. Amine [47] suggested that, from a behavioral standpoint, brand loyalty states to the tendency of a purchasing entity, such as a family, to consistently select the same brand within a particular category over a specified duration. Moreover, it is crucial to analyze brand loyalty through an attitudinal lens, which considers the extent of commitment to the intrinsic values associated with the brand [50].

Furthermore, Oliver, et al. [45] articulated brand loyalty as the capacity of consumers to maintain fidelity to the fundamental brand. Notwithstanding the promotional efforts of competing enterprises, consumers' preference for this brand as their primary selection illustrates this phenomenon Oliver, et al. [45]. The concept of authentic brand loyalty, as articulated by Baldinger et.al, requires the amalgamation of both behavioral and attitudinal components. Illusory brand loyalty emerges when consumers are primarily driven by one of these factors Baldinger and Rubinson [51]. Travis [52] characterized the extreme objective and value of brand equity as brand loyalty, positing that it is synonymous with brand equity. The argument was substantiated by empirical evidence from the research conducted by Myint [53] which demonstrated that brand equity can be achieved through the conditioning of purchasing decisions influenced by loyalty Myint [53]. Aaker [44] posits that brand loyalty represents the consumer's disposition that drives the consistent repurchase of a brand Aaker [44]. Yoo, et al. [27] propose that, brand loyalty can drive consumers to stick with a particular brand instead of considering other options Yoo, et al. [27]. Customers demonstrating brand loyalty will unconditionally gain the brand based on their preceding experiences Yee [54] suggesting that such loyalty can significantly bolster buyers' intent to purchase. Babin and Zikmund [55] undertook empirical research to investigate the relationship between elements of brand equity and their impact on the purchasing intentions of Malaysian consumers, thereby reinforcing this assertion. This research elucidated brand loyalty as the paramount factor influencing purchase intention [55].

2.4. Brand Association

Due to increasing demand and intensified rivalry, brand association (BAS) issues have become prominent in the PC industry in recent years. Users would find it easier to seek for and analyze information if they were better acquainted with brands [56]. The mental representations individuals have of a brand are linked to its attributes, target demographic, and the benefits sought by consumers; hence, these representations underpin brand loyalty and consumer expenditure [57]. Consequently, customers' brand connections are pivotal in the purchasing process Boisvert and Burton [58]. Aaker [44] and Keller [23] articulate that brand association encompasses any element linked to a brand's preference [23, 44]. In contrast,

Emari et al. argued that consumers' positive or negative associations with brands are preserved within their cognitive frameworks, specifically in the brain areas associated with distinct memories [59]. Moreover, it has been argued that every component associated with a brand—encompassing ideas, feelings, recollections, convictions, hues, auditory cues, visual elements, and experiences—forms the brand's associations Kotler and Kevin [60].

Keller [8] posits that when individuals link a brand with positive attitudes, characteristics, and benefits, it strengthens the relationship. Moreover, by providing no clues beyond the product category linked to the brand, one can utilize free association to define brand association by inviting respondents to share their immediate thoughts upon encountering the brand name. Dobni and Zinkhan [61] contend that these components of brand association contribute significantly to the formation of a brand image Dobni and Zinkhan [61]. Evans [62] assert that a brand's representation consists of both the operational and representational aspects of the brand. This classification suggests that consumers engage with the brand's image in tandem with the products, incorporating attributes such as status, affluence, and refinement, while fundamentally fostering a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals Evans [62]. Aaker [42] identified that consumers gain advantages from brand associations, such as improved knowledge processing and recall, favourable emotional reactions, and heightened motivation to acquire the brand. The establishment of brand association generates value for a company by laying the groundwork for prospective extensions Aaker [44]. Prasad [63] prasad proposed that brand association represents a dimension of brand equity in apparel sector Prasad [63] whereas Rio et al. found that it can provide a competitive edge to a brand. Building upon Aaker [44] assertions, Brand association assists organizations in strategically positioning and distinguishing their outcomes, while simultaneously cultivating positive relationships with brands Aaker [44]; Rio, et al. [64] and Dean [65].

Rio, et al. [64] contend that the connections customers form with the brand are essential for the creation and maintenance of brand equity [64]. These assertions suggest that a positive relationship with the brand will contribute to the enhancement of brand equity Aaker [44]. Aaker [42] recognized brand association as essential to purchasing decisions and brand loyalty, whereas O'Cass and Lim [66] argued that brand association plays a crucial role in influencing purchase intention O'Cass and Lim [66]. The correlation between brand association and its influence on consumer attitude and purchasing intention is significantly evidenced in the work of O'Cass and Grace. [67].

3. Research Methodology

The research conducted a comprehensive literature review to establish the conceptual framework. The literature review identified pertinent independent and dependent factors. The discovered independent and dependent variables were employed in the investigation. The current investigation is an empirical study to understand the impact of perceived value and brand elements on the purchasing behavior of cosmetic products. The investigation is based on both primary and secondary data. The demographic of this study consists of fashion and cosmetic retail customers from organized retail formats in the cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, India. The chosen research design for the study is exploratory research design. Exploratory research is characterized as an investigation conducted to examine a problem that is not distinctly defined. The mall intercept technique was employed to acquire data on shoppers who were departing from contemporary retail formats.

The mall intercept method is a type of convenience data collection technique used in market research. It involves intercepting shoppers in a mall or public place and asking them to participate in a survey or interview. Researchers typically approach individuals while they are shopping and ask them to complete a questionnaire or provide feedback about products, services, or brands. This method is popular for its convenience and efficiency, as it targets a broad range of consumers in a natural shopping environment. It can yield quick, real-time data and is often used for consumer behavior studies, brand research, and product testing. However, it may have some biases, such as only reaching individuals who visit the mall, which may not fully represent the larger target population.

Data was collected at 12 distinct retail formats, including cosmetic chain stores, using a structured non-disguised questionnaire that contained questions in a predetermined order. A total of 250 consumers were surveyed following the data collection procedure; however, only 178 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire. The data is collected during Febraury and March, 2024. A pilot survey was conducted to ascertain the legibility of the final questionnaire prior to its development.

Our objective was to identify the factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions of cosmetic products, particularly skin care products, from organized retail outlets. We generated a collection of 19 statements that exemplify a variety of the problem's characteristics. The statements are ranked by the respondents on a five-opinion Likert scale, with five indicating a strong agreement, three indicating neutrality or not knowing, and one indicating a strong disagreement. The impact of brand elements on skincare assortment consumers was identified through the restoration of the factor analysis and structure equation model, a data reduction technique. Assuming that each statement is in some way related to the others. The data collected for the investigation was analyzed using SPSS. Through exploratory interviews with twenty store managers and in-depth discussions with academicians and researchers, we were able to identify various factors that are believed to influence cosmetic consumers' purchase intentions. These factors include perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, as well as shopper demographics and temporal aspects. The exploratory findings were also corroborated by the comprehensive literature review.

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is used in this study, which was chosen for its ability to reduce dimensionality while retaining maximum variance, simplifying the data by transforming correlated variables into uncorrelated components. This allows the identification of latent factors such as brand awareness and purchase intentions. PCA addresses multicollinearity and ensures that key factors capture significant variance (66.3% in this study). Unlike

Factor Analysis, PCA maximizes variance without modeling theoretical constructs. Unlike Regression Analysis, PCA is descriptive, not predictive. It also differs from Cluster Analysis, as PCA identifies components, not groupings. This method was crucial for extracting insights and validating constructs. Hence the study employed this method.

4. Results and Discussion

The questionnaire was structured into three sections. Section A focused on gathering demographic information, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and status. Section B identifies the factors influencing female purchase intention, including attitude, consumer experiences, brand awareness, and price. Section C will focus on the dependent variable, specifically the respondents' purchase intention toward local products, which will be utilized in this study to assess female purchase intention. Table 1 provides a summary of the questionnaire's statistics based on data collected from 178 respondents. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 signifies strong disagreement and 5 implies strong agreement. A total of 16 items were used to evaluate the various relationships. Attitude, consumer experiences, brand awareness, and price were found to influence purchase intentions, represented by items 7, 4, and 5. The highest mean score was recorded for brand awareness, while purchase intentions had the lowest mean. The alpha value for every construct was above 0.7. Table 2 shows the principal component analyses, revealing positive Eigenvalues for brand associations, brand awareness, and purchase intentions, which were 8.444, 4.124, and 3.891, respectively.

Table 1.
Summary statistics of the questionnaire survey.

Constructs	No. of items	Mean	SD	α
Attitude and consumer experiences	7	3.25	1.12S	0.7S8
Brand awareness	4	3.555	1.110	0.821
Price that influences of purchase intentions	5	3.05	1.155	0.799

The summary statistics of the questionnaire survey indicate that participants showed a moderately favorable attitude and consumer experiences, as reflected by a mean score of 3.25 on the Likert scale and a standard deviation of 1.125. This suggests a range of responses with variability around the average, indicating some diversity in participant opinions. This is evidenced by the fact that there was little variety in responses. Based on the reliability of the construct, which is shown by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.758, it appears that the construct has good internal consistency.

A considerably higher mean score of 3.555 was observed for brand awareness, with a moderate degree of variability (standard deviation = 1.110) and an outstanding level of reliability ($α = 0.821$). The influence of price on purchase intentions had a mean score of 3.05 and a standard deviation of 1.155. This indicates that participants had a slightly below-average perception of how price affects their purchase intentions, with a moderate level of variability in responses. Additionally, the dependability score was $α = 0.799$, which indicates that pricing has a moderate impact on the decisions that customers make.

Table 2.
Conclusions drawn from the principal component analysis.

Variables	Brand associations	Brand awareness	Purchase intentions
Distinction among competitors	0.776		
Cultural or Social Affiliations	0.788		
Brand persona	0.781		
Perceived quality	0.831		
Emotional connection	0.835		
Symbolic linkages	0.844		
Reliability and Trustworthiness	0.815		
Brand recall		0.778	
Brand recognition		0.805	
Top-of-Mind Awareness		0.738	
Reach/Frequency		0.789	
Social Influence			0.825
Perceived Value			0.812
Brand Trust			0.824
Product Quality Perception			0.808
Purchase Convenience			0.802
Eigenvalue	8.104	4.114	3.871
Variance explained (%)	33.411	16.115	16.774

Strong correlations between the observed variables and their corresponding latent constructs were confirmed by the main component analysis. The factor loadings for Brand Associations, Brand Awareness, and Purchase Intentions were all found to be higher than 0.7. The analysis explained 66.3% of the total variance, with Brand Associations contributing

33.411%, followed by Brand Awareness and Purchase Intentions contributing 16.115% and 16.774%, respectively. The cumulative variance explained validates the constructs.

As for Table 3 the goodness-of-fit statistics for the measurement and structural models, evaluating their alignment with recommended thresholds. Both models show strong fit indices, with Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom (X²/df) values of 1.318 for the measurement model and 1.378 for the structural model, both well below the acceptable limit of 3. The RMSEA is 0.056 for the measurement model (slightly above the ideal <0.05) and 0.038 for the structural model, indicating a good fit overall. The GFI values are 0.92 and 0.91 for the measurement and structural models, meeting the proposed threshold of >0.91. Similarly, NFI, CFI, and IFI values for both models surpass their respective thresholds (>0.90, >0.89, and >0.91), demonstrating robust model fit. While the measurement model slightly underperforms on RMSEA and IFI compared to the ideal values, the overall results indicate both models are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Table 3.
Measurement model and structural model goodness-of-fit statistics.

	Proposed values measurement model	**Values**	**Structural model values**
X²/df	<3	1.318	1.378
RMSEA	<0.05	0.056	0.038
GFI	>0.91	0.92	0.91
NFI	>0.90	0.944	0.915
CFI	>0.89	0.928	0.929
IFI	>0.91	0.919	0.929

Table 4 displays the ordered loadings, t statistics, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The CR values for all structures range from 0.819 to 0.86, indicating good internal consistency. The AVE values fall between 0.72 and 0.78, which suggests that the constructs have adequate convergent validity.

Table 4.
Measurement model results.

Constructs and variables	**Standardized loadings**	**t-statistics**	**CR**	**AVE**
Attitude and consumer experiences				
Experience in Customer Service	0.803	16.037**	0.86	0.73
Sentimental Bond	0.819	16.430**		
Appraised Worth	0.730	12.397**		
Brand Reputation as Perceived	0.645	11.393**		
Quality of product	0.815	15.592**		
Sensual Appeal	0.698	11.883**		
Post-Purchase Encounter	0.816	15.432**		
Brand consciousness/awareness				
Brand recall	0.912	14.985**	0.89	0.74
Brand recognition	0.825	13.588**		
Top-of-Mind Awareness	0.752	11.284**		
Reach/Frequency	0.824	12.688**		
Price that influences of purchase objective				
Apparent price fairness	0.784	11.234**	0.83	0.79
Price sensitivity	0.715	11.481**		
Price directness	0.689	11.893**		
Consumer attitude	0.704	12.869**		
Price reductions and promotional offers	0.825	15.949**		

Note: ** Significant at P < 0.05.

Table 5 presents the scores of this study, showing that both creators are significant and have a positive impact on customer purchase intentions. This suggests that the evaluated factors play an essential role in shaping consumer decisions to purchase.

Table 5.
Structural model path analysis.

Casual path	**Path coefficient**	**t-statistics**	**Results**
Attitude and consumer experiences→ Purchase objective	0.379**	2.648	Supported
Brand consciousness/awareness →Purchase objective	0.386**	2.305	Supported
Price → Purchase objective	0.381**	2.238	Supported

Note: ** Significant at *P* < 0.05 and *P* < 0.01 levels respectively.

The principal component analysis confirmed robust relationships between the observed variables and their respective latent constructs, showing high factor loadings (greater than 0.7) for Brand Associations, Brand Consciousness/Awareness,

and Purchase Objectives. This indicates that these constructs are well represented by their associated observed variables. The analysis explained 66.3% of the total variance, with Brand Associations contributing 33.411%, followed by Brand Awareness and Purchase Intentions contributing 16.115% and 16.774%, respectively. The cumulative variance explained validates the constructs. The goodness-of-fit indices, including X²/df, RMSEA, GFI, NFI, CFI, and IFI, all meet the suggested thresholds, indicating a well-fitted model.

The results of the measurement model further confirm the validity and reliability of the model. The standardized loadings for all variables were robust (>0.7), and the composite reliability (CR) varied from 0.81 to 0.89, indicating internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) values, ranging from 0.72 to 0.78, indicate strong convergent validity. Furthermore, all factor loadings were statistically significant (P < 0.05 and P < 0.01), providing strong support for the model's constructs. Path analysis of the structural model revealed that all causal relationships were significant. Attitude and consumer experiences positively influenced purchase intentions (β = 0.369, t = 2.657), as did brand awareness (β = 0.376, t = 2.305) and price (β = 0.372, t = 2.238). These findings suggest that improving consumer experiences and brand awareness, alongside strategic pricing, can significantly enhance purchase intentions.

Hence, the findings underscore the importance of focusing on consumer attitudes, brand visibility, and price optimization to influence purchase behaviour effectively. These insights have substantial implications for both managerial strategies and academic research.

5. Discussion and Findings

The study examines how factors such as perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty influence consumer purchase decisions in the Indian cosmetics market. The findings reveal that perceived quality significantly impacts purchase intentions by enhancing the perceived value of products and reducing risks such as financial or performance concerns. Brand awareness, including high recall and recognition, positively affects purchase decisions through effective marketing and consumer engagement. Similarly, brand loyalty emerges as a crucial factor, with loyal customers demonstrating a preference for specific brands, thereby reducing their likelihood of switching to competitors. Positive brand associations, such as emotional connections, symbolic values, and trust, further strengthen consumer attachment to brands, aiding decision-making. Price fairness and promotional offers were found to have a moderate impact on purchase intentions, while consumer attitudes and post-purchase satisfaction also played a vital role in shaping loyalty and repeat purchases.

Using a mall intercept method, the study collected data from 178 participants in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, with statistical analyses validating the relationships among the constructs. The analysis showed that brand associations explained the highest variance in consumer behavior (33.41%), followed by brand awareness (16.11%) and purchase intentions (16.77%). The structural model demonstrated strong reliability and validity, with goodness-of-fit indices confirming the robustness of the findings. The study underscores the importance of building trust, loyalty, and awareness by focusing on product quality, ethical practices, and sustainability. For marketers, leveraging social media and digital platforms to enhance brand visibility and foster strong emotional and cultural connections with consumers can significantly influence purchase behavior. Thus, the research highlights the pivotal role of perceived quality and brand elements in shaping consumer decisions, offering valuable insights for both academic research and strategic business practices.

The results indicate that both elements significantly enhance purchasing intentions. The perceptions and experiences of consumers hold significant importance, particularly in a marketplace saturated with numerous products, each asserting superiority over the rest. Brand associations provide advantages to both the proprietor of the product and the consumer. Brand associations will aid the customer in identifying the brand that aligns most closely with their desires and expectations. The cost enables consumers to correlate products through the lens of value enhancement and benefits. The association is contingent upon the specific product that the brand manager intends to align with. The predominant marketing strategies for cosmetics products emphasized both their attributes and the advantages they offer to consumers, including aspects like organic or natural formulations.

Consumers who prioritize environmental considerations are likely to develop a strong allegiance to brands that align with their values. Additionally, the study performed by Chin and Harizan [68]. These findings corroborate other studies, as price is deemed significant in shaping price perceptions that subsequently influence purchase behavioral intentions. The advantages of a brand are ascertained by the competitive edge that cosmetics can offer when juxtaposed with alternative products available in the marketplace. The recognition of a brand has been established as a crucial element influencing consumer purchasing decisions across a wide array of products. The findings underscore the importance of ethical practices, sustainability, and effective marketing strategies in building trust and loyalty. Leveraging digital platforms and social media enhances brand visibility and consumer engagement [69]. The study highlights the competitive edge of authentic brand associations and targeted awareness initiatives, offering valuable insights for businesses to align with evolving consumer expectations [44, 68, 70].

6. Conclusion

This study aims to assess the influence of perceived quality and brand elements on the purchase intentions of Indian consumers regarding skincare cosmetic products. The study outlines two key objectives to guide the research process. It explored how perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand associations impact consumer purchase intentions in the Indian skincare cosmetics market. It was found that perceived quality plays a significant role in driving purchase intentions by enhancing perceived value and minimizing financial and performance risks. Brand awareness, including recall and recognition, also positively influenced purchase decisions, although its impact on local cosmetic

products was less significant. Brand loyalty emerged as a crucial factor, with loyal consumers showing a strong preference for specific brands, thereby reducing their likelihood of switching. Positive brand associations, such as emotional connections and symbolic meanings, further strengthened consumer attachment to brands.

Moreover, factors like price fairness, promotional offers, and consumer attitudes were found to significantly influence purchase intentions. The analysis also emphasized the importance of post-purchase experiences in fostering brand loyalty and advocacy. Brand associations accounted for the highest variance in consumer behavior, followed by brand awareness and purchase intentions, highlighting the pivotal role of these elements in shaping consumer decisions. The research emphasises the need for marketers to prioritize product quality, transparency, and sustainability while leveraging digital platforms and social media to enhance brand visibility and consumer engagement. By aligning with evolving consumer preferences and emphasizing ethical practices, brands can build trust and loyalty, ensuring sustained competitiveness in a dynamic and crowded market.

6.1. Managerial Implications

Moreover, factors such as price fairness, promotional offers, and consumer attitudes were found to significantly influence purchase intentions. The analysis also emphasized the importance of post-purchase experiences in fostering brand loyalty and advocacy. Brand associations accounted for the highest variance in consumer behavior, followed by brand awareness and purchase intentions, highlighting the pivotal role of these elements in shaping consumer decisions. The research emphasizes the need for marketers to prioritize product quality, transparency, and sustainability while leveraging digital platforms and social media to enhance brand visibility and consumer engagement. By aligning with evolving consumer preferences and emphasizing ethical practices, brands can build trust and loyalty, ensuring sustained competitiveness in a dynamic and crowded market.

6.2. Academic Implications

This study adds to the growing body of research on brand equity and consumer behavior in emerging markets. By examining perceived quality, brand awareness, loyalty, and associations in the Indian context, the research highlights specific factors influencing consumer purchase decisions. It contributes to understanding the interplay of traditional and digital marketing strategies in shaping brand equity.

6.3. Limitations

The study has several limitations. The small sample size of 178 respondents, limited to Hyderabad and Secunderabad, restricts the generalizability of the findings across India's diverse demographics. The cross-sectional design captures consumer behavior at a single point in time, overlooking evolving trends. Moreover, focusing on selected brands excludes insights from emerging or niche players, particularly in the herbal segment. Socioeconomic factors such as income and education were not analyzed in depth, and the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases. The study also gives limited attention to digital influences and excludes male consumer behavior, narrowing the scope. Additionally, while the study highlights purchase intentions, it does not examine post-purchase behaviors like satisfaction or loyalty, which are crucial for long-term consumer engagement. Addressing these gaps could significantly strengthen future research in this area.

6.4. Future Research

This research has identified several limitations and offered recommendations for future scholars in the field. To address these limitations, future research could expand the sample size to include a more diverse demographic, conduct longitudinal studies to track evolving trends, and explore the impact of niche and emerging brands. A more in-depth examination of digital influences, such as influencer marketing and AI-driven personalization, could yield valuable insights. It is also recommended that future studies focus on understanding the factors influencing women's, youth's, and rural consumers' purchasing intentions for cosmetic products. This would provide valuable benefits to consumers, retailers, and academic researchers alike.

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