

Leveraging Networking Groups for Social Shopping with Special Reference to Instagram

T. Gayathri

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce

Nehru Memorial College (Autonomous), Thiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, India

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
COM-2020-08043435

Volume: 8

Issue: 4

Month: October

Year: 2020

E-ISSN: 2582-6190

Received: 05.08.2020

Accepted: 13.09.2020

Published: 01.10.2020

Citation:

Gayathri, T., and S. Preethi. "Leveraging Networking Groups for Social Shopping with Special Reference to Instagram." *ComFin Research*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2020, pp. 38–50.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/commerce.v8i4.3435>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

S. Preethi

Research Scholar, Nehru Memorial College, Thiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

The advent of the Internet and the gradual digitization of select services mark the beginning of a new era in E-commerce and Online access to some facilities that minimize both time and human energy. For example, booking tickets for train travel, air travel, and even bus travel were brought to the fingertips of families which had to otherwise spend a lot of time in long queues before booking counters. Subsequently, other service providers also entered the field with more sophisticated services like booking accommodation, guided tours, and even packaged travel plans. Yatra.com, Make-my-trip, Goibibo, IRCTC, and Red bus are some of the best examples for pioneering efforts that made a considerable impact on services of this kind. In the meantime, the digital platform began to be exploited by new-players who entered the fray with products in almost all walks of life, such as clothing and fashion, beauty care, electronic goods, consumer durables, and even essentials of life such as groceries, fruits, and vegetables. The entry of big-players such as Flipkart and Amazon took online shopping to the next level.

Keywords: Digitization, Social Media, Consumer, E-commerce, Networks and Advertisement

Introduction

Over the last decade, digitization facilitated Cab services, food delivery, and even specialized services like medical consulting, attenders for geriatric patients, and even service of electricians, plumbers, and domestic help. On a higher level, beautification services at home also started picking up in Tier – 1 cities in a big way.

The consumers in recent times are spoiled for choice because of innumerable options available for any product that is sought after. Originally, they used to rely on recommendations from friends, family circles, or even advertisements. However, the emergence of social networking sites and applications has led to a new concept called "Social Shopping," which consumers began to rely upon for reviews and suggestions. The presence of many people in social media sites like Facebook and Instagram and closed groups in WhatsApp have made this aspect very popular in the last five years. Any product that a consumer needs can be looked up for both alternatives and recommendations from these networks. More significantly, the presence of Google enables the producers to follow and analyze the purchase behavior of a consumer and make recommendations for new products that come into the market to cater to their needs. In these contexts, an attempt at understanding the perception of consumers about social shopping would be relevant because this concept has gained momentum in recent times and may well be the next game-changer as a marketing strategy.

Study Objectives

This study is carried out with the following objectives,

1. To document the evolution of E-commerce and the use of social media for the same.
2. To critically examine the acceptance of social shopping among consumers.
3. To capture preferences and purchase behavior of women with special reference to beauty products through Instagram.

Literature Review

Pete Boyle, 2020 suggested two things that are needed to develop a successful online business. The first is the product that helps in solving the problems of the people, and the other one is that which is easy to buy and which activates and engaged the customers. His findings included 147 billion active users of Facebook, 60% users of Instagram, 30% of online shoppers, and he found that social media messenger is involved in creating the ROI champion of e-mail's outperformance. **Shanelle Mullin, 2019** shared three social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest as they are occupying the social commerce space. He insisted that about 70% of followers use Instagram for the discovery of the products. He also pointed out the words of Heidi Cohen, who highlighted the importance of technology, social media platforms, and online shopping as aided to social commerce. According to Heidi Cohen, 74% of consumers depend on social networks to make their decision on the purchase of the products and also concluded that social commerce is one of the growing trends in this era. **Andy Wooley, 2019** explained retail marketing in which businesses and brands are trying their best to convert social media platforms into sales networks. He highlighted some of the reasons to involve social media for the retail business, and that includes higher customer retention and loyalty, an increase of engagements, convenient offers, a high ranking of search to attain the audience with balanced growth. **Conor Bond, 2019** suggested that consumers are fond of going to malls after the release of 'Beverly Hills' in 2005. He termed social shopping as a discovery and inspiration on the social network platforms, which helps the user to reflect their feeling upon it. He found that about 60% of

users on Instagram admit that they find new products to buy on the apps. He also insisted on the secret weapon, which involves the implementation of social shopping strategies into the accounts as many of the users are involved actively in discovering new inspirations to make their next purchase. **Nikki Gilliland, 2018** recorded that according to the salesforce, the millennials of 54% utilize the social channels to research the products before perceiving it.

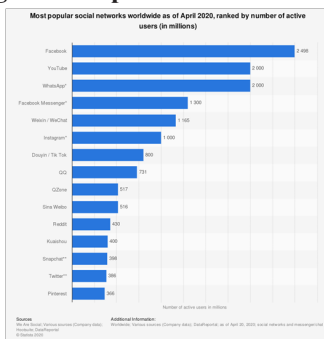
The survey by SUMO yields 82% of shoppers utilizing the social buy buttons and the other forms of social commerce. Based on BI Intelligence, retailers of the top 500 gained \$6.5 billion in 2017 and 24% in 2016 for social shopping. Marketing week reported that about 33% of people in the age group of 18-24 are fonder in purchasing products from Facebook directly. He concluded that Instagram offers a consistent shopping experience in which users buy products without being directed anywhere. **Aimee Millwood, 2015** implied his findings that social increased to 200% from 2014 to 2015 in terms of the shares of E-commerce. He also stated that social commerce is in the top list of predictions in the Google search. He made a statement that the brands cannot enter social commerce without the implementation of strategies to increase their brand awareness and helping the customers in purchasing the products. He highlighted the Pixlee's E-commerce stats that 74% of consumers rely on social media before making a purchase, and 43% of consumers buy the product only after learning about it on social media. **Rainer Olbrich et al., 2011** stated that Social Shopping Communities (SSCs) are the bridge that connects the social networking and online shopping, and he explained that SSCs shopping features are based on the user as they are involved in gaining high rate of growth in the popularity of the consumers. They are helpful in forecasting the purchasing behavior of the consumers.

These studies have highlighted the relevance and impact of social shopping and E-commerce aided by social media. Based on these observations, this study attempts to bring out the critical role of INSTAGRAM as an enabler of social shopping with a special focus on beautification and personal care products.

Analysis and Discussion

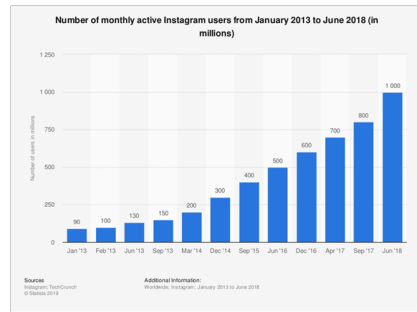
The economic implications of E-commerce and Social shopping have transcended all expectations and as assumed unimaginably high proportions. The reaching out to a customer has never been so easy today, Thanks to Social media and networks. Facebook and Instagram have become instantly popular because of the wide reach and seamless access to information for the business and the consumer. This is particularly so when it comes to products more than services, though services are fast catching up in recent times. Products ranging from residential real-estate of high value and other products that cater to the needs of the consumers like fashion, footwear, handbags, electronic items, including mobile phones and personal care and beauty products are available at the click of the button. The staggering volume of business that is enabled by social shopping is a phenomenon that needs to be taken note of by manufacturers and service providers. Facebook, with a user base of close to 2.5 billion, is closely followed by Instagram with 1 billion as in April 2020. The chart shown below brings out the details of various social media sites in terms of usage.

Figure 1: Popular Social Networks



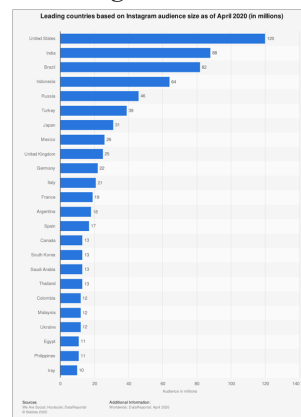
It is evident from the above that Facebook is on top with a user base of over 2.5 billion, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and Instagram. The gap between Facebook and Instagram has been narrowing over the year, and it will not be long before Instagram catches up with Facebook and even surpass it. What started as a medium of posting photographs has now developed into a potential social shopping marketplace with brands reaching out to consumers. The chart shown below captures the rapid strides made by Instagram over the last 5 .5 years till June 2018.

Figure 2: Instagram Users - January 2013 to June 2018



It can be observed that the number of users doubled in a matter of 1 year between 2013 and 2014. After that, Instagram was steadily adding a minimum of 100 million users every year and on at least two occasions, once in 2015 and 2016 when it added 200 million to go up from 400 to 600 million, and again in 2017 and 2018 when it jumped to 1000 million in January 2018 from 800 million in September 2017. The climb has been very steady and very rapid as well. At this rate, it may well overtake Facebook by 2022 if the current trend is any indication. A country-wise break up of users is depicted by the chart shown below.

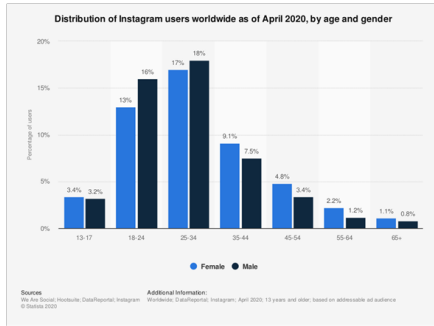
Figure 3: Leading Countries on Instagram



Although the compelling preference for shopping in stores, malls, hyper-mart, or even commercial streets is still alive, the shift towards online shopping or social E-commerce has been on the rise continuously. In a country like India, with a population of over 1.3 billion, the potential market for products and services has been growing tremendously over the year. This can be attributed to the favorable demographic dividend, with more

than 60% of the population cohort in the age group of 18-50. Since the tech-savvy younger population is more inclined towards exploring social shopping as an option, E-commerce portals have begun to leverage this advantage by positioning themselves in all the popular social media networks. The chart is shown below clearly underline this aspect of usage of Instagram in India.

Figure 4: Instagram Users based on Age and Gender



The chart reveals the domination of youngsters in using Instagram in India, with people in the age group of between 25 and 34 contributing to over 35%. Another interesting aspect of this distribution is that the female users overtake the male users as the age increases after 34. Most of the females are known to pay particular attention to personal care and beautification products across the world and India. For this study the three most popular pages that are followed worldwide are considered, and some of the most popular brands and products that are preferred by youngsters and the older people are compared in this section.

Pages Reviewing Beauty Products

Table 1: Beauty Products Pages

Pages Reviewing Beauty Products	
Page	Followers
Pat Mcgrath	3.2 M
Samantha Ravndahl	2.1 M
CC Clarke Beauty	2.1 M

This self-explanatory table shows that beauty products have a huge following, as indicated by the pages shown above. This worldwide consumer following is most likely to translate into purchases shortly if not immediately. The three pages are only

chosen as a part of the small sample to highlight the effect of social shopping, particularly for beauty products and personal care products among women. A product-wise break-up and user following are captured in the following table with number of views, likes, and comments to underline the degree of importance attached by consumers to these products in the chosen pages.

Beauty Products

Pat Mcgrath

Table 2: Views, Likes, Comments on Pat Mcgrath

Products	Pat Mcgrath		
	Views	Likes	Comments
Eye shadow palette	76,64	13,591	877
Concealer	67,019	5958	218
Eyeliners	90,285	10,43	199
Lipstick	93,774	9736	588
Highlighter	109,401	10,976	309
Foundation	53,582	7173	176

Highlighter and Eye shadow palette stand out as the most viewed, liked, or commented about products listed above. In comparison, the other products have received slightly lesser attention, although they also have attracted the interest of consumers. The second popular page by SAMANTHA RAVNDAHL also disclosed similar if not identical trends for the same set of products, as shown below.

Samantha Ravndahl

Table 3: Views, Likes, Comments on Samantha Ravndahl

Products	Samantha Ravndahl		
	Views	Likes	Comments
Eye shadow palette	298,742	32,909	471
Concealer	168,62	17,745	301
Eyeliners	209,783	24,689	262
lipstick	201,933	19,933	304
Highlighter	222,649	18,618	289
Foundation	301,316	31,477	463

Interestingly this page discloses more interest in eye shadow palettes followed by the foundation in terms of views, likes, and comments. Highlighter is relegated to the third place as this stage is concerned.

The other products more or less follow the same trend as in the previous page of PAT MCGRATH. It would be interesting to see how the consumers reacted to the 3rd popular page of CC CLARKE BEAUTY.

CC Clarke Beauty

Table 4: Views, Likes, Comments on CC Clarke Beauty

Products	CC Clarke Beauty		
	Views	Likes	Comments
Eye shadow palette	1,149,152	107,350	680
Concealer	358,022	63,807	311
Eyeliners	1,884,548	153,825	779
Lipstick	219,443	46,010	338
Highlighter	401,495	53,123	263

Curiously, Eyeliner is on the top of this page with the highest views, likes, and comments, followed by Eye shadow palette. Both Foundation and Highlighter have respectively gone down one notch, taking third and fourth place. As for the other products, the consumer interest has almost remained neutral in comparison to the other two pages.

To understand the popularity of each page, a technique of weighing each aspect with a score and taking the cumulative score to rank all the pages has been followed. A weightage of 20% is given for views, 30% for likes and 50% for comments is allotted. The rationale for doing this is that the first reaction of a consumer can be identified by the views, likes, and comments that are expected to result in conversion into sales. The following table captures these aspects, as shown below.

Weightage of Page Dealing with Beauty Products

Table 5: Pat Mcgrath - Weightage

Views	Likes	Comments	Total
1532.8	4077.3	438.5	6048.6
13403.8	1787.4	109	15300.2
18057	312.9	99.5	18469.4
18754.8	2920.8	294	21969.6
21880.2	3292.8	154.5	25327.5
10716.4	2151.9	88	12956.3
			1,00,071.6

Weightage of Samantha Ravndahl

Table 6: Samantha Ravndahl - Weightage

Views	Likes	Comments	Total
59748.4	9872.7	235.5	69856.6
3372.4	5323.5	150.5	8846.4
41956.6	7406.7	131	49494.3
40386.6	5979.9	152	46518.5
44529.8	5585.4	144.5	50259.7
60263.2	9443.1	231.5	69937.8
			2,94,913.3

Weightage of CC Clarke Beauty

Table 7: CC Clarke Beauty - Weightage

Views	Likes	Comments	Total
229830.4	32205	340	262375.4
71604.4	19142.1	155.5	90902
376909.6	46147.5	389.5	423446.6
43888.6	13803	169	57860.6
80299	15936.9	131.5	96367.4
90139	15313.8	115	105567.8
			10,36,520

Ranking of Page Dealing with Beauty Products

Table 8: Ranking of Pages

S. No.	Page	Rank
1	Pat Mcgrath	3
2	Samantha Ravndahl	2
3	CC Clarke Beauty	1

Based on the technique adopted, the three pages are ranked based on the cumulative score (after due weightage). CC CLARKE BEAUTY is on the top of the list with over 1 million cumulative scores (1,036,520), and the next page of SAMANTHA RAVNDAHL is far behind (294,913.3), almost 70% lower. The third page of PAT MCGRATH is also lower (100,071.6), which is even lower than the second one compared with the 1st ranked CC CLARKE BEAUTY.

Turning attention to personal care products, a similar exercise was carried out, which are tabulated below.

Pages Reviewing Personal Care Products**Table 9: Personal Care Products Pages**

Pages Reviewing Personal Care Products	
Page	Followers
The Beauty Bloss	48.8 K
Nykaa Beauty Book	335 K
Gelcream	120 K

The three popular pages for personal care going by the number of consumers following are slightly lesser in terms of numbers than beauty products. Page-wise product distribution and consumer reaction are captured below.

Personal Care Products**The Beauty Bloss****Table 10: Likes, Comments on the Beauty Bloss**

Products	The Beauty Bloss	
	Likes	Comments
Skin creams	693	53
Face Serum	1319	61
Hand cream	745	77
Face Mask	491	64
Toner	712	48

Despite the global lock-down or restricted business due to shopping limitations and delivery limitations, face serum and hand cream continue to be on top based on views, likes, and comments. Surprisingly the most important product, called face mask, is at the bottom, although people may find it difficult to access Spas and Beauty parlors in the current condition (COVID-19) due to fears of the pandemic and the need for social distancing. A similar trend is also witnessed in the second popular page, as shown below.

Nykaa Beauty Book**Table 11: Likes, Comments on Nykaa Beauty Book**

Products	Nykaa Beauty Book	
	Likes	Comments
Skin creams	510	5
Face Serum	688	8
Hand cream	650	6
Face Mask	1242	10
Toner	1514	19

This popular page has more consumer interest for toner followed by a face mask. Perhaps, people have their page preferences for each product because the face mask was low down the order in THE BEAUTY BLOSS page, whereas it ranks higher at number 2 on this page. On the other hand, face serum was on the top in THE BEAUTY BLOSS, whereas it is low down the order on this page. It is necessary to see if this view is substantiated in the third popular page, GEL CREAM.

Gel Cream**Table 12: Likes, Comments on Gel Cream**

Products	Gelcream	
	Likes	Comments
Skin creams	4097	95
Face Serum	1847	34
Hand cream	5127	69
Face Mask	5903	144
Toner	3658	270

Both face mask and toner are neck-to-neck in this page based on the likes and comments of followers. Not surprisingly, face serum is at the bottom, vindicating the view expressed earlier about consumer preferences of products on each page. Based on the consumer following these pages, a similar weighing technique is adopted, as was done earlier to rank all the pages from the product point of view. This is represented in the following tables.

Weightage of Page Dealing with Personal Care Products**Weightage of the Beauty Bloss****Table 13: The Beauty Bloss - Weightage**

Likes	Comments	Total
277.2	31.8	309
527.6	36.6	564.2
298	46.2	344.2
196.4	38.4	234.8
284.8	28.8	313.6
		1765.8

Weightage of Nykaa Beauty Book

Table 14: Nykaa Beauty Book - Weightage

Likes	Comments	Total
204	3	207
275.2	4.8	280
260	3.6	263.6
496.8	6	502.8
605.6	11.4	617
		1870.4

Weightage of Gel Cream

Table 15: Gel Cream - Weightage

Likes	Comments	Total
1638.8	57	1695.8
738.8	20.4	759.2
2050.8	41.4	2092.2
2361.2	86.4	2447.6
1463.2	162	1625.2
		8620

Ranking of Page Dealing with Personal Care Products

Table 16: Ranking of Pages

S. No.	Page	Rank
1	The Beauty Bloss	3
2	Nykaa Beauty Book	2
3	Gelcream	1

It is evident from the table above that GEL CREAM is ranked number 1 from the products' views and likes, although it has 120 thousand followers as compared to NYKAA BEAUTY BOOK with 335 thousand followers. THE BEAUTY BLOSS is at the bottom not only because of the lesser number of followers (48 thousand) but also because of the choice of products by consumers for social shopping. It would be appropriate to see how the ratings influence purchase behavior, particularly in leading online shopping portals like AMAZON. This is because people turn to INSTAGRAM pages to select products and online E-commerce portal for purchase of the same. The following table captures the rating and number of reviews for the chosen products.

Instagram Brands and their Amazon Rating Brands in Beauty Products

Table 17: Beauty Products Brands

Brand Name	Followers
Maybelline New York	10.3 M
Loreal Paris	8.7 M
Lakme India	1.5 M

The above table reveals that the top 2 brands are way ahead in AMAZON going by the number of followers. LAKME INDIA is lagging far behind with only 1.5 million followers as against 10.3 million and 8.7 million for MAYBELLINE NEW YORK and LOREAL PARIS, respectively. This is understandable because LAKME is an Indian brand that is yet to become popular among INSTAGRAM users worldwide.

Amazon Rating of Beauty Products

Table 18: Ratings, Reviews of Products - Maybelline New York

Products	Maybelline New York	
	Rating	No. of Customers Reviewed
Lipstick	3.9	8861
Foundation	4.1	890
Eye Palette	3.8	1408
Mascara	3.8	3493
Nail Paint	4	688

The beauty products of MAYBELLINE NEWYORK enjoy a good rating for at least two of its products, foundation and nail paint, whereas lipstick enjoys more views because people are keen on buying this product because of a 3.9 rating. Both mascara and eye palette also enjoy a rating of 3.8, which is by no means insignificant. There are also opinions expressed about the reason for the foundation being on top because of the limited options compared to lipstick, which has more than 100 options.

Table 19: Ratings, Reviews of Products - Loreal Paris

Products	Loreal Paris	
	Rating	No. of Customers Reviewed
Lipstick	3.9	876
Foundation	3.8	4313

Eye Palette	4.3	21
Mascara	3.8	1979
Nail Paint	4	693

Interestingly the trend is completely reverse in LOREAL PARIS, where the eye palette is on top and foundation and mascara are at the bottom. This may indicate consumer preferences for particular products in each brand. The reviews however, are more for the foundation in this brand.

Table 20: Ratings, Reviews of Products - Lakme India

Products	Lakme India	
	Rating	No. of Customers Reviewed
Lipstick	3.8	6840
Foundation	3.9	1635
Eye Palette	3.8	480
Mascara	3.9	2806
Nail Paint	3.8	2658

The LAKME products also exhibit a similar trend like LOREAL PARIS with foundation and mascara being on top with a rating of 3.9 while the others are close behind with a rating of 3.8. The review is however, are more for lipstick for the reasons mentioned earlier (more options for shades).

The consumer perception of the brands and products can be gauged by looking at the positive and negative comments for the products.

Positive Reviews/ Comments in Amazon

Table 21: Amazon - Positive Reviews/Comments

Maybelline New York	
Products	Reviews
Lipstick	The best thing about this lipstick is that it's got matt finish without being the least bit dry. It feels creamy and comfortable. It also stays for a long time without caking or looking dry.
Foundation	Love this foundation. So far had been using glass bottle version, but this tube is much more convenient for travelling. Medium coverage, light weight formula, matte finish. Even out skin tone very well, but won't really hide dark spots on the skin. But light enough to use every day for natural make-up look.

Eye Palette	Awesome product by Maybelline. Experimenting with colours now.
Mascara	This mascara is wonderful. Don't hesitate to buy it seeing the bad comments. Its smudge proof, waterproof, long lasting, you can remove t easily by coconut oil.
Nail Paint	Does not chip off easily, long lasting, affordable

Table 22: Amazon - Positive Reviews/Comments

Loreal Paris	
Products	Reviews
Lipstick	The texture feels velvety, gives somewhat creamy smooth finish on lips. Will look beautiful on fair skin even if take the lipstick off it leaves a stain on your lips which is kind of good if you cover it up with a transparent lip balm.
Foundation	It works as claimed. Medium coverage with a demi-matte finish, I wore it for back to back functions from 11am-11pm and it stayed without cracking or turning patchy. Till 11pm when I took it off, my make-up looked fresh. It doesn't oxidise like the Maybelline Fit Me Poreless Matte
Eye Palette	Good colours
Mascara	It's a great mascara. Lasts long and does not powder. Does a great job of volumizing and staying put all day? The waterproof version makes it a little hard to remove.
Nail Paint	The colour is rich and dries quickly. Enhances even the look of a medium complexion wearer. Suits fairer skin.

Table 23: Amazon - Positive Reviews/Comments

Lakme India	
Products	Reviews
Lipstick	Love the shade, it brightens your look, without being loud. Plan to use it as a day-wear lipstick. If you have used 'Red Chaos' in the past, this is similar to that. The formulation is slightly drying, you will need to prep the lips before application if you have dry lips.
Foundation	Sweat proof, lasts the entire day, even skin tone, perfect finish, oil free look

Eye Palette	Palette is compact. Travel friendly. It includes basic colours which can match with every casual dresses. It has little bit of shimmer only.
Mascara	Mascara lasts very long and top is easy and perfect to apply very happy with my product.
Nail Paint	Beautiful colour, original product, price of the product is affordable

Mascara	Everything about this product is bad. Can't believe this is L'Oréal. This is like semi solid carbon. Eyelashes never look separate and beautiful. They look sticky. To remove this is impossible. The brush a liquid is too thick
Nail Paint	I received a CND Vinyl lux in an awful colour. I am disgusted with this experience.

Negative Reviews/ Comments in Amazon

Table 24: Amazon - Negative Reviews/Comments

Maybelline New York	
Products	Reviews
Lipstick	The colour is very nice. But the quality is rough, it wasn't so when I opened the package. Gradually it getting granular. I have used Maybelline lipstick several times and they were all very good. So, this particular one is very disappointing. May be this piece is defective. Another strange thing is that I observed there was a price tag on the lipstick with MRP 299/- whereas I paid the regular price, 450. Kindly look into the matter and check who was the seller.
Foundation	Very little quantity
Eye Palette	The product is nothing like it appears on screen. The shimmer or glitter is just the top layer of the eyeshadow, and then it's very dull and unappealing.
Mascara	Don't buy this product its dry and started itching my eyes once applied
Nail Paint	Colour is not as same as shown in the picture

Table 25: Amazon - Negative Reviews/Comments

Loreal Paris	
Products	Reviews
Lipstick	Product was broken from inside
Foundation	The colour range is quite poor and I am stuck between 2 shades. L'Oréal might be a drugstore brand but they need to expand the shade range.
Eye Palette	Damaged product received from amazon

Table 26: Amazon - Negative Reviews/Comments

Lakme India	
Products	Reviews
Lipstick	Colour is a little different when applied on the lips. Smooth texture. Nice smell. Stays longer. But lips feel drier.
Foundation	After applying I felt burning sensation. Will not recommend.
Eye Palette	Product was not sealed properly and even though the product has 3 years of expiry only 8 months was left when I got the product.
Mascara	Worst mascara ever. Mouth of the bottle is so wide that when you pull the brush it is totally covered with black cream and all you can see is a long stick entirely covered with black cream.
Nail Paint	Coverage is not good at all. its chipping out in a single day and the application is also not smooth. It's too thick for applying an even coat.

The comments are indicative of the purchase behavior of consumers and their impact on sales. A satisfied consumer is a brand ambassador because she will promote her circle and share her good experience. On the other hand, the dissatisfied customers would share negative comments in the open forum, affecting the rating and the purchase decision of other consumers. Looking at personal products for rating and views following information is obtained and tabulated. Only two products have been considered in this study for personal care products.

Brands in Personal Care Products

Table 27: Personal Care Products Brands

Brand Name	Followers
Wow Skincare India	210 k
Biotique	346 k

The two products, namely WOW SKINCARE and BIOTIQUE, are also popular on Instagram with over 210 thousand and 346 thousand followers, respectively. How this reflects in rating at AMAZON is tabulated below.

Amazon Rating of Personal Care Products

Table 28: Ratings, Reviews of Products - Wow Skincare

Products	Wow Skincare	
	Rating	No. of Customers Reviewed
Moisturiser	4.1	138
Face Wash	4.2	4746
Shampoo	3.8	14,930
Hair Oil	3.9	2392
Body Wash	4.2	162

Both face wash and body wash are on top with a rating of 4.2, whereas the other three products are just below with ratings of 4.1, 3.9, and 3.8, respectively. This is an indication that the consumer base for all the products of this brand is quite high, and this is also reflected in the views that are looked at.

Table 29: Ratings, Reviews of Products-Biotique

Products	Biotique	
	Rating	No. of Customers Reviewed
Moisturiser	4.3	22
Face Wash	4.1	2325
Shampoo	3.9	1776
Hair Oil	4	3044
Body Wash	4.4	2950

A similar trend with slightly higher ratings is visible for BIOTIQUE products, with body wash on top with a rating of 4.4 closely followed by the other products with reasonably good ratings. In terms of views also there is more or less a similar trend except for that hair oil and body wash are on top whereas the other three products are slightly behind.

It would be interesting to capture some positive and negative comments for both brands with the respective products. This is tabulated below.

Positive Reviews/ Comments in Amazon

Table 30: Amazon – Positive Reviews/Comments

Wow Skincare India	
Products	Review
Moisturiser	The moisturiser is very lightweight, gives matte finish and very nice smell
Face Wash	One of the best faces wash I have ever used. Because brush is attached to it so it is easy to wash face. Not at all harsh to skin. Cleanses face. Removes dead skin cells
Shampoo	Great shampoo for dry hair when you use it with herbal + coconut oil
Hair Oil	Have been using it over a year. Great results, baldness gone within months of application. Don't waste your money on hair transplant. Buy this product it will naturally stimulate hair growth
Body Wash	The body wash feels natural and organic with the aroma of the apple cider and a hint of vinegar. The skin is refreshed and feels soft and moist after regular use. Definitely value for money and better than any other big brands.

Table 31: Amazon - Positive Reviews/Comments

Biotique	
Products	Review
Moisturiser	I have been using the product since last 10-15 days. Keeps skin hydrated and makes it softer. Really good moisturiser
Face Wash	Will keep buying until I find something better which is highly doubtful considering what this face wash delivers at such an affordable price point. Cleanses my dehydrated skin leaving behind soft and really clean skin. No dryness whatsoever that I can even skip moisturiser when I feel super lazy
Shampoo	I have been using this shampoo for 6 months and find it useful. It is very economical devoid of any chemicals. Helps in arresting hair fall and nourishes well. It will not give a cosmetic finish like most departmental store or expensive brands but is truly therapeutic. It is a basic shampoo which does what it says.

Hair Oil	Love this product. I was having major hair fall issue before applying this. After I started using this, my hair fall reduced to a great extent. Issue this before the day I shampoo my hair. I use it at night and only on the scalp and leave it overnight and wash my hair the next day. Best hair oil I've ever used. I got myself the 800ml bottle this time.
Body Wash	I used it first in a resort during travel. I loved the smell so much that I ordered my own at home. Its awesome fragrance, gentle feeling, and its paraben free. I hope it is 100% natural and ayurvedic like they claim. It lathers softly and leaves a nice smell and feel after shower.

Shampoo	It is not suitable for dry hair and dry scalp. I am having more hair fall after using it a couple of times. Though they say it is an organic product, they only mention a few names in the ingredient list.
Hair Oil	I thought it was organic and went for it. But it sorts of increased my hair fall
Body Wash	After going through the review, I thought to give it a try and found that there is nothing special in it. It's just liked a normal body wash. I neither sensed any refreshing feel nor any aroma

The above comments bring out the dynamics of consumer perception about the products under consideration. While one set of consumers gives a very positive review for moisturizer of both brands, there are others who raised doubts about the content, the nature of flavor (artificial), and its effect on skin type. Hence, the popular age-old victim of "Caveat Emptor" (let the buyer beware) holds good even today.

Findings and Conclusion

The analysis and discussion in the preceding section of this paper have led to some interesting aspects summarized as findings below. Although the study relied entirely on secondary data, the ordeal of compiling page wise and product wise information from INSTAGRAM called for an eye-for-detail which was reasonably adhered to. More importantly, the information has been gathered for internationally recognized and followed pages and brands that are very popular among consumers in their capacity as users and beauticians.

Findings

1. First and foremost, the follower base for INSTAGRAM has been growing tremendously over the last seven years, and it stands at over 1 billion today. It contributes to 67% of the advertisement revenue of FACEBOOK and has started attracting more social E-commerce firms and shopping consumers.
2. US and INDIA together account for over 20% of the total users and more than 25% of the active users as in April 2020. As a result, INSTAGRAM

Negative Reviews/ Comments In Amazon:

Table 32: Amazon - Negative Reviews/Comments

Wow Skincare India	
Products	Review
Moisturiser	Check the ingredients list before buying. It has artificial fragrance and it is so strong. It is so heavy that after applying my face starts sweating. Buy only comedogenic and fragrance-free moisturiser.
Face Wash	It didn't suit me at all. got more pimples on my face. And even purchased wow shampoo conditioner and oil but all are worst
Shampoo	Makes my hair greasy. It's supposed to give your hair shine
Hair Oil	This oil is useless and there is nothing wow about it. You can purchase this product as a normal hair oil but don't expect miracle or hair growth, as claimed by this product, at all.
Body Wash	It's nice but not giving any lightening to my skin. Giving very dull look.

Table 33: Amazon - Negative Reviews/Comments

Biotique	
Products	Review
Moisturiser	(No bad comments)
Face Wash	It is neutral, doesn't do anything, waste of money.... Bought this after reading reviews but it does not even serve purpose of normal face packs.

has become a preferred destination for many products but more particularly, Personal care and beauty products both for the shoppers and the manufacturers (83% beauty products and 39% for personal care products).

3. Interestingly, the most active users (35%) are in the age group of 25-34, with female users increasing in percentage as the age goes up.
4. India may well emerge as the biggest social shopping platform through INSTAGRAM because the major cohort of the population (60%) is young in between 18 and 50. Since people in this age group are more conscious about both appearance and personal care, the pages and the branded products advertised in this platform are likely to increase shortly.
5. Internationally, the most popular pages belong to the big name in the industry. Sooner or later, smaller players may enter this fray with retail brands to compete with manufacturer driven brands.
6. Beauty products have managed to enjoy a higher rating in the most popular online platform, AMAZON, compared to Personal care products, although the brands are different.
7. The growing awareness among women about maintaining skin tone, texture, and skin health has contributed significantly to the increased follower based in Instagram, thus becoming a leading social shopping portal for buyers and sellers to come together. This is evidence to buy the fact that the volume of business through Instagram for the manufacturers and Instagram itself has grown considerably over the years.
8. While the consumer shopping through Instagram amounted to over 36%, about 87% of the people claimed that they use the INSTAGRAM platform in making the purchase decision according to eMarketer Study.

The number of marketers who use INSTAGRAM for businesses has risen from 53% to 73% over the last three years, thus proving the strength of the platform to attract buyers and sellers.

Conclusion

The term serendipity, which is used to describe an accidental discovery, may well be the best words

to describe social media networks because the intentions with which they were started are not the same as the users to which they are currently applied. What started as a simple attempt to bring people together to networking has now magnified into a high potential social E-commerce platform growing at a staggering pace today. The innovation in application development has reached the next level, with more and more customized applications taking a prominent position in social media. For instance, apps that help consumers to try the fashion products on themselves before a purchase, the suitability of beauty products for an individual that can be easily ascertained by superimposing the product on the customer's photograph (like a lipstick, foundation, eyeliner, eye shadow and many more) have all enabled the ease of online shopping without worrying about the fit of the product for the consumer. The seamless integration of digital technology with applications has resulted in remote shopping emerging as a strong contender to offline stores. This has never been appreciated so much as today when the woman has to give-up their compelling habit of shopping in stores due to mandated lockdown or the worries about the community spread of COVID-19. During these monotonous times, when people are pinned to their homes, social shopping is considered more an entertainment than even a shopping convenience. The world is evolving today into a technology-driven business model where all aspects of daily life, such as banking, finance, investment shopping, and even self-beautification, may be aided by digitization and innovation. Sooner or later, even spas and parlors may go virtual and help their customers to learn the tricks of making up and preserving their face and body through online demonstrations of specialized skills. This business model may move away from a skill-based execution to that of an advisory or consultancy service. The customized products can all be sourced through social shopping, and the art of beautification may well become a cottage industry. The success of any business today lies in its ability to bring about the seamless integration of people, processes, and technology to achieve cutting-edge cost efficiency and process efficiency. Social media networks may well emerge as the facilitators to achieve this end by unifying themselves into

every function of every business, although they are experimenting with the market today. Along with payment banks, social media networks like FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER, and others are likely to take up financial intermediation, investment banking to promote fundraising through IPOs or convert them into recruitment platforms by bringing all the stakeholders on a common platform. This may sound a little far-fetched today, but it may well become a compelling reality in the future.

References

- Abbamonte, Kiera. "Social Commerce for Retail: What is it and 3 Examples of Retailers Doing it Well." *Shopify*, 2018.
- Abed, Salma. "An Empirical Examination of Instagram as an S-Commerce Channel." *Journal of Advances in Management Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2018, pp. 146-160.
- Bond, Conor. "Social Shopping for Beginners: How to Sell on Facebook & Instagram." *Wordstream*, 2019.
- Boyle, Pete. "The Secret to the Future Growth of Your Ecommerce Channel: Social Commerce." *BigCommerce*.
- Chen, Jenn. "Important Instagram Stats you Need to Know for 2020." *SproutSocial*.
- Finlay, Shane. "Social Commerce Will Change the World - Here's How to Get It Right." *Digitalist*, 2018.
- Gilliland, Nikki. "Are People Buying on Social Media?" *Econsultancy*, 2018.
- Hoey, Morgan. "Narratives Brands and Consumers Create about Social Commerce." *SSML*.
- Iqbal, Mansoor. "Instagram Revenue and Usage Statistics (2020)." *Business of Apps*, 2020.
- Millwood, Aimee. "Top Social Commerce Trends for 2016." *Yotpo*, 2015.
- Mullin, Shanelle. "Social Commerce: What it is, What it isn't, and Why You Should Care." *CXL*, 2019.
- Olbrich, Rainer, and Christian Holsing. "Modeling Consumer Purchasing Behavior in Social Shopping Communities with Clickstream Data." *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2011, pp. 15-40.
- Wooley, Andy. "Reasons to Use Social-Shopping Sites and Social Retail Apps." *OnSpot*, 2019.

Author Details

Dr. T. Gayathri, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Nehru Memorial College (A), Thiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India

S. Preethi, Research Scholar, Nehru Memorial College, Thiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India