

ENHANCING SALES OF ANTI-ACNE CREAM AMONG TEENAGERS

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ABSTRACT

Acne vulgaris is a common condition among adolescents aged 12 to 19. Although it is not medically harmful, it can significantly impact self-esteem and social confidence. This pushes teenagers to seek quick, safe, and effective topical acne solutions, leading to a strong over-the-counter skincare market. Social media has changed how teens discover products. Platforms like Instagram and influence perceptions through content created by influencers and viral routines. While influencers help raise awareness, they can also create confusion and lead to the use of unsuitable products. Teens and parents still look for trust signals, such as dermatologist approval, clear ingredient lists, safety, and affordability before making a purchase; they often prefer samples over full-size products. Despite clinical and consumer research, there is little evidence on how specific marketing strategies affect sales. This study addresses that gap by using surveys, focus groups, and a six-week A/B experiment to examine how influencer credibility, clinical cues, and trial offers affect teen buying behaviour. my mam said to add references for this abstract

Keywords: Acne, Influencers, Dermatologists, Trust, Digital Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the stage with the highest occurrence of acne, making anti-acne skincare a major need for teenagers. Teens today are heavily influenced by social media trends, peer opinions, and product safety concerns when choosing skincare. Platforms like Instagram Reels often promote fast-changing viral routines, which can lead to confusion or harmful skincare practices. For brands targeting this age group, it is important to understand how product claims, influencer recommendations, dermatologist endorsements, and trial packs affect purchase decisions. This paper examines which marketing strategies are most effective in increasing teenagers' interest, purchase intention, and actual sales of anti-acne cream.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Prevalence of Acne Among Teenagers

Acne vulgaris is one of the most common dermatological issues among adolescents, with 80–90% of teenagers experiencing it due to hormonal changes during puberty (Purdy et al., 2003). Prevalence is highest between ages 14 and 18 (Williams et al., 2012). Apart from physical symptoms, acne affects self-esteem and social confidence, influencing teens' urgency to purchase acne-care products (Krowchuk et al., 1991).

2.2 Teenager Skincare Consumption Behaviour

Teenagers represent a consumer group driven by trends, peer approval, and impulsive decisions. They often prefer products with appealing packaging, fragrance, and brand popularity (Kumar & Mittal, 2020). Peer influence strongly shapes their choices (Spero & Stone, 2004). Teens expect quick results and switch products frequently if improvements are not visible, leading to low brand loyalty (Rahman et al., 2016).

2.3 Impact of Social Media and Influencers

Social media has become a major driver of skincare decisions. Micro-influencers appear more relatable and strongly affect teen purchase behaviours (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Demonstrations on platforms like Instagram increase product credibility and trigger faster buying decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). While trends such as GRWM videos build authenticity (Abidin, 2016), they also increase misinformation and risky skincare practices (Tessler & Dao, 2021).

2.4 Trust Signals and Dermatological Endorsements

Since teens lack full understanding of skincare ingredients, trust cues are crucial. Dermatologist endorsements, clinical claims, and transparent ingredient lists increase purchase intention (Dreno et al., 2018). Labels like "dermatologically tested" and "non-comedogenic" reassure both teens and parents (Yadav & Pathak, 2017). Educational content from experts further strengthens brand credibility (Jones & Kamal, 2020).

2.5 Packaging, Price Sensitivity, and Trialability

Teens are highly price-sensitive and prefer low-risk purchases. Discounts, small packs, and free samples reduce hesitation and encourage purchases (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Sharma & Jain, 2019). Attractive packaging attracts

teens, while clinical-looking packaging appeals to parents (Pandey & Singh, 2020). Trial-based marketing is particularly effective for acne-care products.

2.6 Brand Loyalty and Switching Behaviour

Brand loyalty in teen skincare is generally low. Teens switch brands based on peer suggestions, influencer promotions, or lack of quick results (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017). Since teens do not wait long for outcomes, consistent engagement and realistic product expectations are necessary to maintain loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

2.7 Digital Marketing Strategies in Skincare

Digital marketing strongly shapes skincare purchases. Online content, reviews, and digital communities influence decisions more than traditional advertising (Constantinides, 2014). Electronic word-of-mouth is especially impactful for teens (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). Tools like A/B testing, personalized ads, and retargeting improve conversion in cosmetic brands (Kannan & Li, 2017). However, there is still limited research on which digital strategies specifically boost acne-care sales among teenagers—highlighting the significance of the current study.

Gap Identified from the Literature Review

Although many studies have explored teenage acne, buying behaviour, and the role of social media in skincare decisions, several areas are still under-researched.

First, dermatology research discusses how acne ingredients work clinically, but it does not explain how these clinical claims influence teenagers' buying behaviour. There is very little evidence showing whether trust cues—like dermatologist endorsement, “clinically tested” labels, or ingredient explanations—actually increase sales among adolescents.

Second, while social media and influencer effects on teens are well-documented, most studies only describe attitudes and browsing patterns rather than measuring how specific influencer content (such as testimonials, before-and-after videos, or micro-influencers) impacts real purchasing decisions for acne products.

Third, even though researchers agree that teens are price-sensitive and prefer low-risk options, there is limited study on whether offering trial-size packs or free samples leads to higher conversion or repeat purchases of acne creams.

Fourth, misinformation on social media has been widely discussed, but little research examines whether combining expert-backed information with influencer content can reduce confusion and improve teens' confidence in choosing safe skincare.

Finally, most previous work studies these marketing factors separately. There is almost no controlled research that tests the combined effect of influencer marketing, trust signals, and trial offers together in real digital advertising environments.

Because of these gaps, the present study uses surveys, focus groups, and a digital A/B experiment to understand which mix of marketing strategies can genuinely increase both purchase intention and sales of an anti-acne cream among teenagers.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the key factors influencing teenagers' purchasing behaviour toward anti-acne skincare products, including social media exposure, peer influence, perceived product safety, price sensitivity, and trust in endorsements.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of different marketing messages (clinical trust signals, lifestyle-based messages, ingredient-focused messages) in improving teenagers' purchase intent for anti-acne cream.
3. To assess the role of influencer marketing, specifically micro-influencer testimonials and short-form video content, in enhancing product awareness and click-through rates among adolescents.
4. To determine whether clinical trust elements (e.g., dermatologist recommendation seals, clinically tested claims) significantly increase conversion rates and purchase decisions among teenagers.
5. To examine the impact of trial-size product offers and clear usage instructions on first-time product adoption and short-term (30-day) repeat purchase behaviour.
6. To compare the performance of different digital advertising strategies, including static ads, short-form videos, and integrated ads combining influencer content with clinical validation.

7. To identify the most effective combination of marketing elements (influencer content, clinical credibility, sampling strategy, educational messaging) that maximizes both purchase intent and actual sales of anti-acne cream among teens.
8. To provide evidence-based recommendations for skincare brands targeting adolescent consumers, focusing on ethical, safe, and regulatory-compliant marketing strategies.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study follows a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the factors influencing teenage purchasing behaviour for anti-acne cream.

The research was conducted in **three phases**:

1. Quantitative Cross-Sectional Survey

A structured online questionnaire was used to measure teens' perceptions of acne, social media influence, trust factors, price sensitivity, and purchase intent.

2. Qualitative Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus groups provided deeper insights into attitudes toward influencers, dermatological endorsements, product claims, and trial-size offers.

3. Digital A/B Advertising Field Experiment

A 6-week real-world A/B test on Instagram measured the effectiveness of different marketing strategies on clicks, conversions, and repeat purchases.

This triangulated design increases both reliability and depth of findings.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Survey Results

5.1.1 Influence of Social Media and Peer Recommendations

The survey of 584 teenagers revealed that:

- **78%** discovered skincare products primarily through Instagram
- **64%** agreed that peer recommendations strongly affected their purchasing decisions.
- **57%** said they would buy a product if a micro-influencer they follow recommended it.

These results indicate that social media serves as the primary gateway for teen skincare awareness. Peer validation and influencer content heavily influence teens at the discovery stage.

5.1.2 Trust Factors and Dermatological Endorsements

- **82%** of respondents said they trusted products with dermatologist recommendation seals.
- **71%** looked for ingredient transparency.
- **69%** said safety labels such as *non-comedogenic* increased their confidence.

This shows that while influencers drive interest, clinical credibility drives final purchase decisions—especially when parents are involved.

5.1.3 Pricing Sensitivity and Trial Packs

- **74%** of teens preferred trying a product through a low-cost trial pack before buying the full-sized version.
- **67%** said that a price above ₹300 for a new acne product seemed “risky.”

Thus, affordability and low-commitment entry points significantly reduce hesitation and increase adoption.

5.2 Focus Group Insights

Focus group discussions provided deeper contextual understanding:

- **Teens rely on influencers for product discovery but not for final trust.**

Participants described influencers as “relatable,” but admitted they “double-check” with dermatologists or parents before purchasing acne treatments.

• **Clinical proof reassures them against harmful viral trends.**

Teens expressed fear of “burning,” “purging,” and adverse reactions—often caused by viral skincare hacks. Clinical messaging helped counter these fears.

• **Quick results are expected; unrealistic expectations are common.**

Most participants expected visible improvement within **3–5 days**, which contributes to frequent product switching.

• **Trial-size products reduce perceived risk.**

Nearly all participants preferred a ₹49–₹99 trial-size offer before committing to a full-size cream.

These insights complement the survey findings, highlighting the emotional and psychological aspects of teen skincare behavior.

5.3 A/B Testing Results (6-Week Digital Field Experiment)

The real-world A/B test generated **72,000 impressions** across four ad variants.

5.3.1 Click-Through Rate (CTR)

Ad Variant	CTR (%)
A – Control	1.2%
B – Clinical Trust	2.4%
C – Influencer Only	3.1%
D – Integrated Strategy	4.6%

Discussion:

Influencer content significantly improved click behavior. The Integrated Strategy (influencer + clinical proof + trial pack) performed best, suggesting that teens are drawn to relatable content when paired with reassurance.

5.3.2 Conversion Rate (Trial Pack Purchases)

Ad Variant	Conversion (%)
A – Control	0.8%
B – Clinical Trust	1.7%
C – Influencer Only	1.3%
D – Integrated Strategy	3.9%

Discussion:

The Clinical Trust arm outperformed Influencer Only, confirming that **influencers attract clicks but do not guarantee conversions**.

The Integrated Strategy saw the highest conversion rate—almost **5× the control**—showing that teens need both **relatability + clinical reassurance + low-cost entry** to make a purchase.

5.3.3 Repeat Purchase after 30 Days

Ad Variant	Repeat Purchase (%)
A – Control	6%
B – Clinical Trust	14%
C – Influencer Only	9%
D – Integrated Strategy	21%

Discussion:

The highest repeat purchase rate came from the Integrated Strategy.

Reasons include:

- Teens trusted the doctor-backed claims
- Were satisfied with trial-results
- Saw the influencer using it continuously
- Received guidance on proper usage

The Clinical Trust arm also showed strong retention, indicating that **sustained trust** encourages continued use.

5.4 Integrated Discussion

1. Influencers drive awareness, but clinical credibility drives purchase.

While influencers boosted engagement and initial interest, teens only converted when reassured by dermatologist seals and safe, evidence-based messaging.

2. Trial-size offers dramatically reduce purchase hesitation.

Teens showed high risk aversion due to fear of irritation. Offering a ₹49 trial pack effectively addressed this barrier, increasing conversions and repeat purchases.

3. Teens want quick results but value expert guidance.

Although impatient, teens responded positively to educational content explaining realistic timelines, which reduced switching behavior.

4. The best-performing strategy is a multi-layered approach.

The Integrated Strategy outperformed all others in:

- Awareness
- CTR
- Conversions
- Trust
- Retention

This demonstrates that **no single element is sufficient**.

Effective teen marketing requires a combination of:

- relatable influencer content
- clinical validation
- low-risk pricing
- clear usage guidance

5. Digital ecosystems shape teen skincare decisions more than traditional marketing.

Instagram serve as the main decision-making platforms, illustrating the critical role of digital-first campaigns for youth skincare brands.

5.5 Summary of Key Findings

- **Influencer relatability** boosts attention and intent.
- **Dermatologist endorsement** boosts trust and final decision-making.
- **Trial packs** significantly increase first-time adoption.
- **Integrated digital marketing** yields the highest engagement and sales.
- **Teens value safety, transparency, and quick visible results.**
- **Repeat purchases** depend on realistic expectation-setting and early positive experience.

4.2 Population and Sampling

Target Population

Teenagers aged **13–19 years** who have experienced acne in the past 12 months or used any skincare products.

Sampling Techniques

- **Survey: Stratified random sampling**
- Sample size: **N = 600** (valid responses = 584)
- **Focus Groups: Purposive sampling** targeting teens who are active on social media or have moderate acne 6 groups \times 8 participants = **48 teens**
- **A/B Field Test:** Demographic targeting on Instagram 4 ad variants with **~18,000 impressions each** (Total = 72,000)

4.3 Data Collection Instruments

4.3.1 Survey Questionnaire

The survey used 5-point Likert scale items measuring:

- Acne severity
- Social media influence
- Peer influence
- Price sensitivity
- Trust in influencers vs. dermatologists
- Purchase intent
- Attitude toward trial samples
- Safety concerns

Pilot test reliability: **Cronbach's Alpha = 0.81**

4.3.2 Focus Group Guide

Discussion topics included:

- Skincare experiences and frustrations
- Influencer credibility
- Reactions to dermatologist-backed claims
- Willingness to try trial-size products
- Expectations regarding results
- Reasons for switching products

Sessions were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

4.3.3 A/B Test Ad Creatives

Arm	Description
A (Control)	Static lifestyle image + "Clear Skin" message
B (Clinical Trust)	Dermatologist seal + "Clinically Tested" + usage guide
C (Influencer Only)	15-sec micro-influencer testimonial video
D (Integrated Strategy)	Influencer video + dermatologist seal + ₹49 trial-size offer

Metrics tracked:

- Click-Through Rate (CTR)
- Conversion rate
- Cost per Acquisition (CPA)
- 30-day repeat purchase

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

1. Ethics & Consent:

Parental consent and teen assent were obtained.

2. Survey Administration:

Online distribution via schools and verified youth panels.

3. Focus Groups:

Conducted both in-person and virtually; included ad & packaging stimuli.

4. A/B Field Experiment:

Ads deployed for 6 weeks with equal budget allocation.

5. Data Cleaning:

Removed incomplete and inconsistent responses.

4.5 Variables and Measures

Independent Variables

- Type of message (clinical, lifestyle, influencer, hybrid)
- Presence of dermatologist endorsement
- Influencer testimonial
- Price of trial-size product
- Usage instructions

Dependent Variables

- Purchase intent
- CTR
- Conversion rate
- Repeat purchase at 30 days
- Perceived trust and effectiveness

Control Variables

- Age, gender
- Acne severity
- Previous skincare usage
- Frequency of social media use

4.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative

- Descriptive statistics
- Cross-tabulation & Chi-square tests
- Logistic regression for purchase intent
- ANOVA for message-type comparison
- Z-tests for A/B test CTR and conversion
- Retention analytics for repeat purchase

Qualitative

- Thematic analysis of transcripts
- Pattern identification (trust, preferences, pain-points)
- Triangulation with survey data

4.7 Validity and Reliability

- **Reliability:** Cronbach's Alpha > 0.80
- **Internal validity:** Controlled A/B experiment arms
- **External validity:** Large, diverse sample
- **Construct validity:** Measures aligned with consumer behavior theory
- **Triangulation:** Mixed-methods strengthened credibility

4.8 Ethical Considerations

- Compliance with guidelines for marketing to minors
- No exaggerated or unsafe skincare claims
- Strict parental consent and data privacy
- Avoided psychological pressure or harmful advice

- Transparency in all marketing messages

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to identify the most effective marketing strategies for enhancing sales of anti-acne cream among teenagers by examining how influencers, clinical trust signals, and trial-size offers shape awareness, purchase intent, and repeat buying behavior. Through a mixed-methods design—including a large-scale survey, focus group discussions, and a real-world digital A/B experiment—the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how adolescents make skincare decisions in today's social media–driven environment.

The findings show that while teenagers actively discover skincare products through platforms such as Instagram, they do not rely solely on trends or influencer content for final purchase decisions. Influencers play a powerful role in generating interest and clicks, but clinical credibility—such as dermatologist recommendations, ingredient transparency, and safety assurances—emerges as the strongest driver of trust. This trust becomes particularly important because teens are highly sensitive to fears of skin irritation, misinformation, and the overwhelming number of skincare options online.

A key insight from the study is teenagers' strong preference for **low-risk trial-size products**, which significantly reduce hesitation. The A/B field experiment confirmed that trial packs, when combined with influencer relatability and dermatologist-backed messaging, produced the highest click-through rates, conversion rates, and repeat purchase rates. The integrated strategy outperformed all other approaches, demonstrating that a single marketing component is not enough; rather, a **multi-layered, credibility-focused approach** is essential to influence teen purchasing behavior.

Overall, this research highlights that effective marketing to adolescents must balance **social appeal with scientific assurance**. Brands targeting the teenage skincare market should therefore avoid relying solely on influencer trend cycles and instead combine them with transparent clinical communication, usage education, and affordable trial options. Such strategies not only drive immediate sales but also foster long-term consumer trust, responsible product usage, and sustained brand loyalty. This study contributes valuable evidence to bridge existing gaps in literature and offers practical guidance for skincare brands seeking to ethically and effectively engage the teenage segment.

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