

Research Article

A Study of Consumer Perception and Awareness Towards Online Shopping of Beauty Products for Women

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Abstract: The current paper explores the consumer behavior and awareness of online purchase of beauty products in women. It discusses, among other things, issues affecting purchasing decisions, including product quality, brand awareness, and convenience, and obstacles to online shopping, including concerns about authenticity and delivery problems. The sample was comprised of 300 women who were surveyed online, and the results showed that although the majority of females think online beauty products tend to be of good quality, a considerable percentage of women had strong concerns on product authenticity and poor experiences. Awareness of the brand was instrumental in the buying behavior where social media and online reviews were the most dominant sources of information. Most purchase decisions were determined to rely on convenience, product reviews, and competitive prices with obstacles including delayed deliveries, problems with returns and the unavailability of physical testing to determine the feasibility of online shopping being a limiting factor to some women. The payment security was very high, and the fear of fake products and the quality of customer attention was common. The research recommends an emphasis of e-commerce platform on increasing transparency, solving barriers, and building consumer confidence in an attempt to enhance the whole online experience of beauty shopping.

Keywords: online shopping, beauty products, consumer perception, brand awareness, purchase decision, barriers, trust and security, e-commerce.

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INTRODUCTION

The internet and the rapid technological advancement have brought a total change in consumer behavior particularly in the retail sector. Among the other industries, the cosmetics and beauty products have developed greatly in the online market, with an increasing number of women opting to purchase beauty products through the online shopping platforms. Online beauty shopping has a great number of advantages including convenience, a broader range of products, low prices, availability of global brands, and the ability to review the views of other customers before making a purchase. Because of these factors, the preferences of customers have shifted, and a large number of women seeking beauty products have shifted to online shopping.

Despite these benefits, there are a number of challenges that the online purchase of cosmetics creates to the knowledge and perception of customers. Unlike the traditional brick and mortar retail outlets, online platforms do not provide customers with the opportunity to touch, feel and taste the products and then purchase them, which may cast some doubt on the authenticity, suitability and quality of the products. Other concerns that affect the entire purchasing experience are concerns on counterfeit products, delays in delivery, refund policy and security of online transactions. Due to a close relation of personal care and beauty goods, the trust in the reliability of the brand and the product quality is even greater.

Brand recognition also plays a key role in the choice of customers in the online business dealing with beauty. The honest brands are more likely to be trusted and purchased online by women who are well acquainted with those reputable brands. Meanwhile, the less knowledgeable ones can hesitate to buy something or can require a greater enticement in the shape of

discounts, suggestions or positive reviews. Also, the tendency of the customers to buy beauty products online depends on various factors such as convenience, usability of websites, prices strategies, special deals, and the quality of customer service.

To establish effective strategies, customer problems, and long-term customer loyalty, merchants and marketers need to understand the attitudes and knowledge of women about online beauty purchase effectively and understand them well. This study aims at exploring the perceptions of women regarding the quality of beauty products they buy over the internet, the level of their brand awareness, the key factors that attract their buying choices, and find out the reasons that they are not able to buy them. The research is expected to deliver information that can help beauty companies, online market places and marketers in enhancing the online purchasing experience, gaining customer trust and meeting the evolving needs of the female consumers in the digital era by analyzing the consumer behavior within this context.

Growing Importance of Online Shopping in the Beauty Sector

The introduction of smartphones, the penetration of the internet, and the shift of consumers lifestyles have all led to the significant growth of the beauty industry in the online sector especially in recent times. Online shopping has become a favorite option among the current women as there are numerous advantages associated with it, which are time-saving, product comparison ease, better access to various brands, and convenience. The beauty companies are switching towards digital marketing tactics, including influencer collaborations, digital try-on systems, and personalized recommendations, to communicate with the customers through the online channels. Despite such improvements, consumer concerns about how authentic, quality and post purchase services are remain a major issue nonetheless. Thus, developing and sustaining this segment of the market will require understanding how women perceive the reliability and quality of beauty products purchased over the Internet.

Role of Consumer Perception and Brand Awareness

Consumer impression plays a critical role when it comes to the decision to buy products online and especially regarding product quality and reliability. The customers are particularly concerned with the quality of the products and the brand reputation because beauty products may influence appearance, self-esteem, and well-being. Brand awareness influences the consumer buying behavior by providing the customers with a sense of security as well as reducing the perception of the risks involved in making online transactions. Those who are well acquainted with popular brands are more likely to make a purchase with confidence over the internet, however, those acquainted with them are less likely or even lack confidence. The online beauty industry also depends on factors such as product availability, cost, convenient as well as ratings and reviews to determine consumer perception and satisfaction. Knowing these factors would help firms to more effectively target their marketing, lead to consumer retention and loyalty in female customers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parajuli et al. (2021) conducted on the basis of investigating female customers in Kathmandu Valley showed the level of knowledge regarding the online purchase of beauty products was quite low. Their findings showed that although a significant percentage of women knew the value of online shopping, a significant percentage of them went ahead with caution due to the concerns on the validity of the products, the quality guarantee, and the problem of deliveries. This implies that although the population of individuals who are making purchases online is growing, there are still knowledge and trust gaps that should be bridged in order to record a greater market penetration.

Mishod, Aziz, and Mohamed (2022) explored the impact that the self-conscious fascination of women with beauty has on the efficacy of internet advertisement. As the results of their studies stated, the obsession with beauty among women increased when they frequently came across idealized images of beauty on the internet resources. Their views on beauty standards were also changed with this exposure. This implies that internet advertising does not only market products but also indirectly affects the self-image of consumers, which again may affect the consumer buying behavior as far as beauty products are concerned.

Macheka, Quaye, and Ligaraba (2024) emphasized that internet customer reviews and celebrity promotion plays an important role in deciding the buying behavior of young women customers. Their research study revealed that the confidence of consumers is highly enhanced, perceived risks are decreased, and chances of purchasing a product are elevated in case of positive assessments and celebrity endorsement reliance were factored. This conclusion is particularly relevant to the beauty industry, where the issue of trust and perception of a product efficiency are highly significant elements in the buyer decision.

Ameen, Cheah, and Kumar (2022) was carried out to determine how emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR), chatbots, and social media, can affect the self-esteem and body image of female customers who belong to Generation Z. It was found that the experience of shopping that can be delivered by the usage of these digital tools can have a positive effect on the experiences of the customers. Online buying has not had physical testing and this has been compensated with

augmented reality (AR) technologies that allow people to test a product virtually, especially in the beauty industry.

Purwianti and Niawati (2022) carried has conducted research on the effects that the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), brand attitude and brand image has on the consumer intentions to make a purchase. Their findings revealed that desirable e-word-of-mouth and the strong brand image significantly enhance the degree of confidence that the customers develop towards a product and want to purchase it through the Internet. This highlights the high value that peer pressure and brand image have in the buying behaviour of consumers especially in areas like beauty industry that personal recommendation and trust is very important.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the approach used to look at women's perceptions and knowledge of online beauty product buying. In order to thoroughly investigate the study objectives—which included customer perception of quality, brand awareness, variables affecting online purchases, obstacles to online buying, and trust/security concerns—a mixed-methods approach was used in the methodology. The following subheadings provide a detailed discussion of the approach.

3.1. Research Design

This paper has used quantitative research approach to collect and interpret numerical data that describes the experiences, feelings and preferences of women regarding beauty purchases online. To achieve the main objectives of the study a structured survey has been developed to determine the perception of the respondents on the quality of the products, brand awareness, motivation to buy and what problems may arise when they shop online to buy cosmetics. This poll was released on the Internet to ensure that as many people as possible would answer and to be sure that the sample was representative of all the online cosmetics shoppers.

3.2. Population and Sample

The target population of the research was women older than 18 years who had already bought at least one beauty product online within the past six months. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample whereby a broad section of women making purchases of cosmetics online would be able to respond to the queries. Women who completed the survey were 300 in total, and it ensured that there was sufficient information to provide valuable information. The sample was heterogeneous both in age, wealth, and location to provide a general image of the way people purchase cosmetics over the internet.

3.3. Data Collection

Online survey that was self-administered was used to collect data. We distributed it to email, social media and online beauty communities. The poll contained both questions of closed-ended and Likert-scale to determine what people knew and thought. The closed-ended questions were supposed to elicit certain facts regarding what the participants believed about brand awareness, product quality, what causes them to purchase items, and what prevents them to purchase items online. We examined the perception of the respondents regarding trust, convenience and security among other factors of online purchase of beauty products using Likert-scale questions.

In order to be sure that the questions were legitimate, reliable, and clear, a small team of individuals was used to pre-test the survey. A minor modification was done on the questionnaire prior to its being sent to the entire sample depending on the responses.

3.4. Variables

The study focused on the following key variables:

- Perception of Product Quality: The opinions of the respondents on the dependability, genuineness, and satisfaction of beauty items bought online.
- Brand Awareness: The degree to which participants were aware of online beauty businesses, as well as their familiarity with different platforms and product lines.
- Purchase Influencing Factors: Important elements that affect choices to buy include price competition, product reviews, convenience, and product diversity.
- Obstacles to Online purchasing: Issues or challenges that inhibit or forbid online buying of beauty items, which includes delayed shipments, uncertainty in the authenticity of products and the inability to sample items physically.
- Trust and Security: Have faith in the safety of the online purchasing process, including payment security, product legitimacy, and customer support.

3.5. Data Analysis

The survey results were examined with the help of descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. The survey data was analyzed. They were used to identify patterns and regularities in the answers. The counts of times each Likert-scale question was answered were counted to obtain a feeling of the extent to which people felt about a variety of things including trustworthiness of online shopping sites, ease of use of the products and product quality.

Inferential statistics were used to determine the existence of meaningful relationships between demographic variables (age and income) and views or behaviors of the participants on online beauty purchase. To determine whether there is any correlation between categorical variables, including the confidence in product authenticity and brand awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With this section the findings of the study on the feelings of women about and their knowledge of purchasing online in the beauty products will be displayed in terms of the findings of the data gathered in the survey. Analysis of the data was in regard to the key objectives that had been established in the study. These objectives were to understand the way people are satisfied with the quality of beauty products, with their awareness of the brand, the influence of other factors on the purchase, and why it is difficult to use online shopping. Findings are classified into different areas in accordance to the review of responses given by the three hundred women who took part in the study.

4.1. Perception of Quality of Beauty Products Purchased Online

The research aimed at knowing the way women perceive the quality of beauty products bought.

Table 1: Perception of Quality of Beauty Products Purchased Online

Perception of Quality	Frequency (%)
High quality, as expected	38%
Quality is generally good	42%
Uncertain or mixed experiences	12%
Poor quality, often disappointed	8%

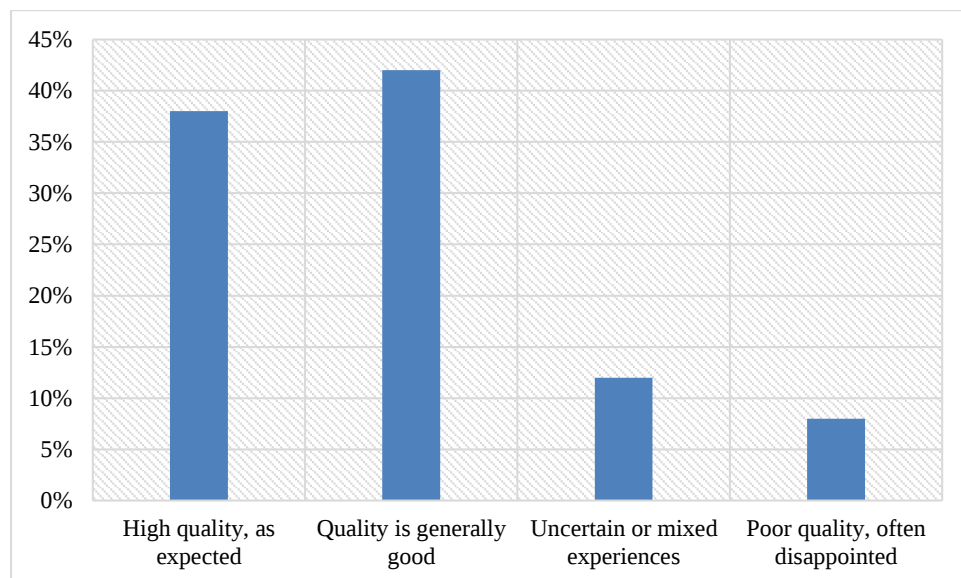


Figure 1: Perception of Quality of Beauty Products Purchased Online

The studies indicate that women tend to believe that the beauty products they purchase online are of quality. All in all, 80 percent of those who participated were satisfied with the quality of the things, as 42 percent of the participants noted that the quality was usually good, and 38 percent believed that it was great, as was anticipated. This indicates that the majority of women are satisfied with the items they purchase online which demonstrates that online stores are satisfying client requirements in terms of quality. However, twelve percent of respondents who responded to the question stated that their experiences were ambivalent or indistinct. This implies that there have been some women whose experience in quality of some products can be different or not even certain whether all beauty products advertised on the internet are identical. Others who make purchases online are displeased and this may be as a result of such factors as fake products, inaccurate product information or excessive expectation. Eight percent of the population was dissatisfied with sub-grade stuff. These findings indicate that the area of consistency and authenticity can still be enhanced to ensure that customers are even happier, although the overall impression of the quality of the products is positive.

Brand Awareness in Online Beauty Shopping

The other important dimension investigated in the research was brand awareness. The need to understand the extent to which women are aware of the existence of online beauty brands is a vital part in marketing strategies and positioning of the brand.

Table 2: Brand Awareness in Online Beauty Shopping

Level of Brand Awareness	Frequency (%)
Highly aware of popular brands	52%
Moderately aware of some brands	35%
Minimal or no awareness	13%

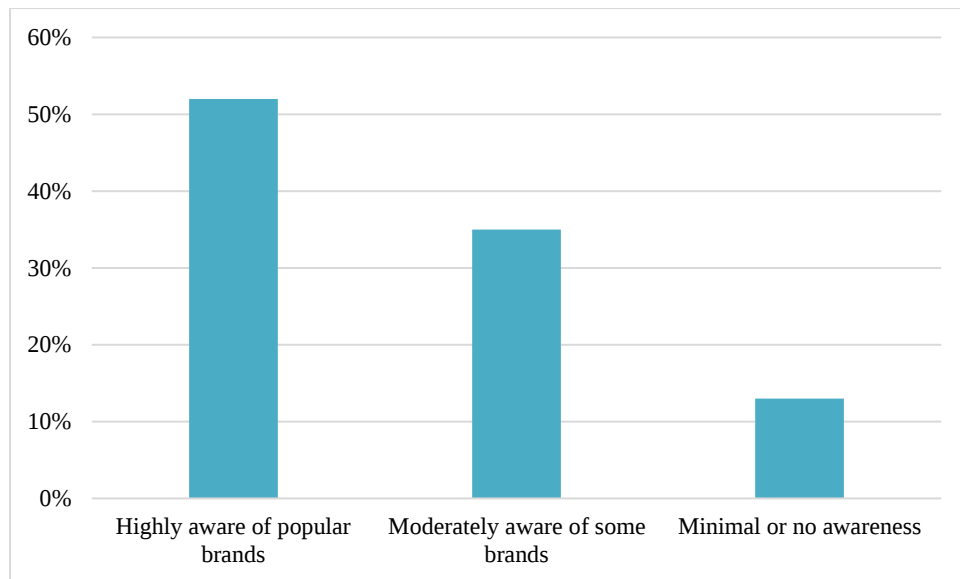


Figure 2: Brand Awareness in Online Beauty Shopping

The findings show that brand awareness has a significant influence on the online cosmetic buying behavior of the women. Over 50% of the respondents who responded (52%), said they were very much aware of well-known cosmetic brands, which demonstrates that these companies must be well-known and be well-represented in the online market. Such awareness will be vital in terms of consumer trust and influence of buying behavior because well established brands normally provide the customers with the perception that they are quality and reliable. The remaining 35 percent of the individuals who participated reported that their brand awareness is moderate, that is, they are aware of the existence of certain firms, but they do not know much about them. This group of people would appreciate special marketing campaigns to enhance their brand recognition. Nevertheless, 13% of the respondents to the question had little or no knowledge about beauty brands. This implies that it has a market segment that can be considered to be willing to explore new or unknown products, yet they might need additional information and familiarity. According to these findings, brand exposure and creative marketing are critical in increasing brand awareness and engaging more people in online business of beauty.

4.2. Factors Influencing Online Beauty Product Purchases

There are a number of factors that determine the choices of women on the online purchases of beauty products, such as convenience and prices, product reviews and availability.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Online Beauty Purchases

Factors	Frequency (%)
Convenience of online shopping	50%
Product reviews and ratings	25%
Competitive pricing	15%
Availability of product range	10%

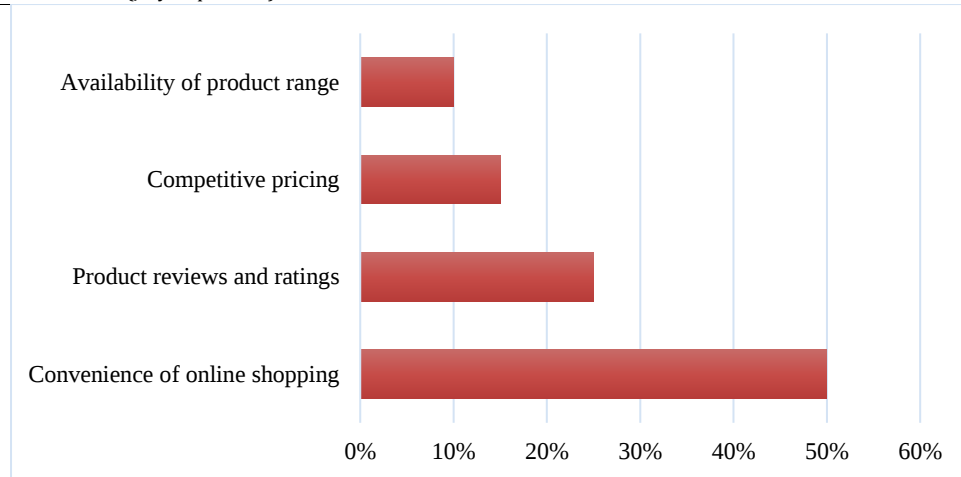


Figure 3: Factors Influencing Online Beauty Purchases

The findings indicate the choices of women to purchase beauty products online are largely determined by convenience as 50 percent of the respondents indicated that the convenience of online shopping plays a significant role in their product choices. It means that women enjoy being able to read and make purchases whenever they want to, with ease and comfort, which highlights the necessity of using a convenient and user-friendly online shopping experience, product reviews and ratings rank among the second most important factors. This underlines the importance of evaluations in nurturing confidence and the societal assurance of effectiveness and quality of products, where 15% of women said competitive pricing was a key factor, yet it is not crucial as convenient and ratings. Finally, 10 per cent of participants mentioned a strong offering of products as one of the main factors, so, even though product variety is crucial, it is not as crucial as other factors in defining consumer behavior. This information indicates that to meet the preferences of customers, online beauty stores are advised to focus more on ensuring customers have a pleasant shopping experience, encourage customer feedbacks, maintain competitive prices, and ensure the variety and focus of their product lineup.

4.3. Barriers to Online Beauty Shopping

The research also found out that there are a number of obstacles that prevent women to shop online beauty products. The knowledge of these barriers is significant in understanding how to enhance online shopping experience by the business.

Table 4: Barriers to Online Beauty Shopping

Barrier	Frequency (%)
Issues with product returns	35%
Delivery delays or problems	30%
Concerns about counterfeit goods	25%
Lack of physical testing	10%

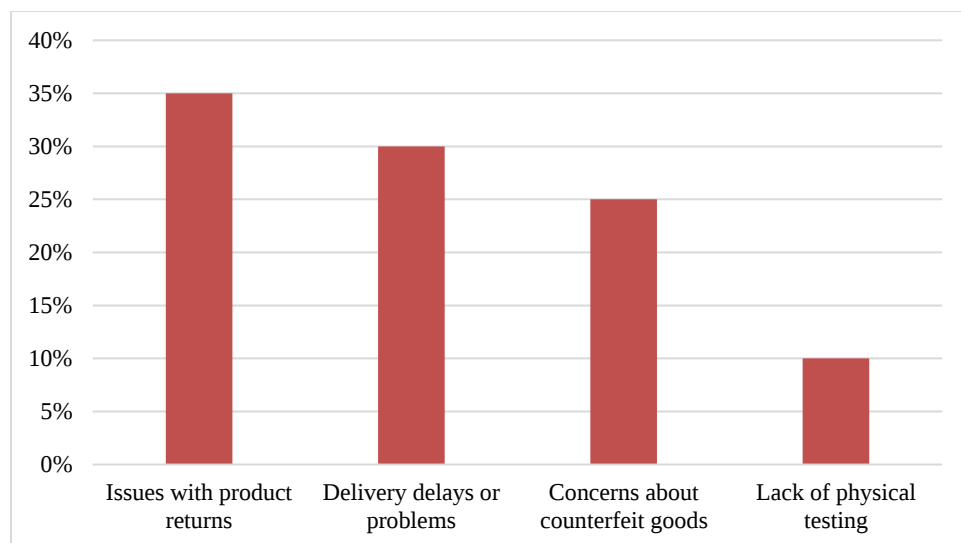


Figure 4: Barriers to Online Beauty Shopping

Its findings indicate that there exist several significant issues that render the process of women purchasing beauty products on the Internet difficult. The biggest problem mentioned by 35 percent of the participants was the need to send-back goods, indicating that the complex or cumbersome nature of the returns policy may prevent individuals to shop beauty products online. Problems with delivery or delays were another biggest concern of the 30% of the respondents with the answer. This implies that invalid shipping, or delayed delivery may lead to customer dissatisfaction and diminished ability to repurchase. 25% of women indicated that they were concerned with counterfeit products which implies a significant number of customers are not aware of whether the products they order online are fake. This demonstrates the necessity of e-commerce sites in ensuring that the items that they are selling are authentic and transparent. Lastly, a much less but not least 10% of the participants mentioned lack of physical testing as an obstacle, since most of the customers prefer to test beauty products, especially skincare and cosmetics, before they buy it. These challenges identify what the online beauty stores can improve on, especially describing their products in more detail to counter the failure to physically test something, stronger return policies, reliable shipping options, and product authenticity.

4.4. Trust and Security in Online Beauty Shopping

Online shopping behavior involves the element of trust and security. Businesses would need to know their influence on consumer confidence.

Table 5: Trust in Online Beauty Shopping

Trust Factor	Frequency (%)
Trust in website security (payments)	60%
Trust in product authenticity	30%
Trust in customer service	10%

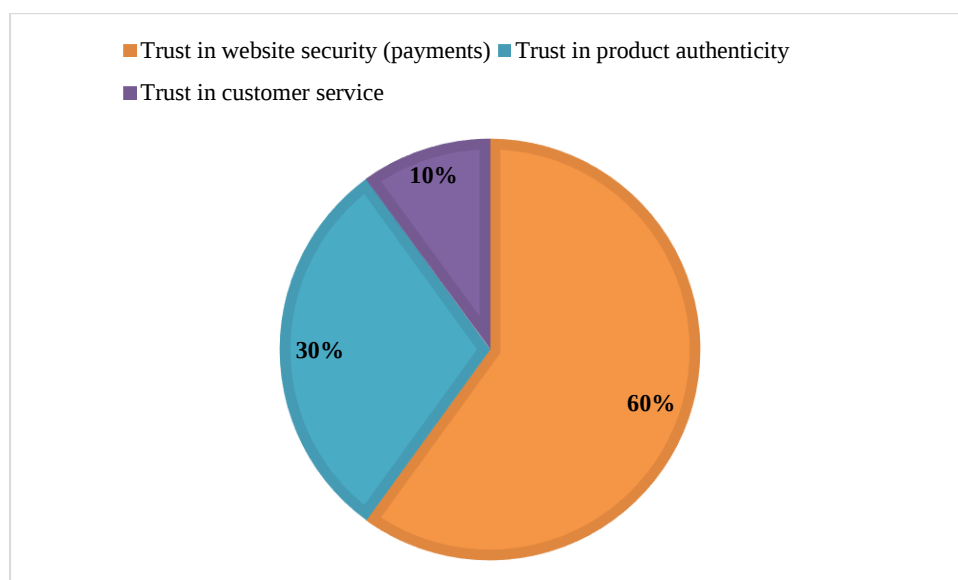


Figure 5: Trust in Online Beauty Shopping

The findings indicated that 60 percent of the individuals who participated in the study said they were certain that online transactions were safe. It implies that women ought to be more worried about the security of sites, particularly those dealing with payment systems, when they purchase beauty products on the Internet. This implies that individuals can make secure payment options the first option when they make an online purchase because they have concerns about their financial security. However, only one in every three individuals who responded that they believed online stores to be true to their words that they sell real products, which reveals that the issue of counterfeit or misrepresented cosmetics is a very huge problem. This implies that women have a sense of security in their transactions, but they do not know of the quality of the products. In addition, they found that only 10% of women trusted customer service so it is possible that online cosmetic retailers are not doing enough to ensure that people feel good about their shopping experience there. E-commerce websites should work harder to enhance their customer service and establish better relationships with their consumers in order to make them feel more confident about shopping online. The reason is that customer service is not trusted by people.

CONCLUSION

This poll demonstrated that females usually believe that the cosmetic products they purchase over the internet are of high quality. Nevertheless, there are certain individuals who still fear the quality and validity of the products. Brand awareness significantly influences the purchasing choice, and the social media and online reviews are the most significant ones. The

main factors that made people purchase beauty products online were convenience, competitive prices, and reviews. Conversely, issues such as inability to refund the products, delays in receiving the products, and inability to sample the products physically continued to make some people not purchase the products. Another area of interest was trust and safety where most of the people claimed that they trust online payment systems and they are still concerned with counterfeit goods and customer service. To improve online beauty purchase, e-commerce websites must eliminate such issues, clarify what the items are, and make security and customer support priorities.

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