

Understanding the Transition: Factors Affecting Online Buying Behavior for Direct-to-Consumer Beauty Products in Western Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Using secondary data sources, the current study investigates the major determinants influencing Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) beauty product purchasing behavior online. The beauty and personal care sector has undergone tremendous transformation due to the growing adoption of digital technology and changing consumer preferences. Direct communication between businesses and consumers has been made possible by the rise of D2C brands, improving convenience, personalization, and transparency.

The study emphasizes how the COVID-19 epidemic significantly accelerated the uptake of online purchasing, especially in the cosmetics industry. The study finds important factors like personalization, sustainability, digital engagement, trust, convenience, social proof, and technological innovation through a thorough analysis of the body of existing literature.

The results imply that these elements work together to affect consumer perception and buy intent, particularly in developing areas like Western Uttar Pradesh. In order to comprehend digital consumer behavior and create successful tactics, the study offers researchers and marketers useful insights.

Keywords: D2C, Online Buying Behavior, Beauty Industry, Consumer Preferences, Secondary Data

1. Introduction

The way customers engage with markets has been completely transformed by the quick development of digital technologies, especially in the beauty and personal care sector. The conventional retail paradigm, which was centred on physical shopfronts and middlemen, has steadily changed over the last ten years to include more direct and digitally driven alternatives. The emergence of the Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) business model, which enables companies to interact with consumers without depending on third-party distributors, is one of the most important breakthroughs in this shift. This methodology allows for a more customised and data-driven customer experience in addition to improving brand control over price and communication.

A significant turning point in this evolution was during the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel limitations and worries about health and safety caused offline retail operations to drastically fall. In order to fulfil their everyday demands, especially those related to cosmetics and personal hygiene, consumers increasingly looked to digital platforms during this time. As consumers grew increasingly accustomed to online transactions, digital payments, and home delivery services, what had once been a necessity gradually transformed into a preferred method of buying. Many of these newly developed behaviours have continued even after pandemic-related limitations were loosened, suggesting a long-term change in consumer behaviour.

The internet's function has also changed significantly. It was once thought of mainly as an information source, but it is today a fully integrated and dynamic business environment. In addition to exploring things, consumers now use internet platforms to evaluate options, read reviews, watch tutorials, and make well-informed purchases. Because of their many uses, digital platforms have a significant impact on consumer behaviour, particularly in product categories like beauty where perception and information are crucial.

Online purchasing is becoming more and more popular due to a number of variables. These include accessibility, the capacity to peruse a large selection of goods, affordable prices, and the ease of making purchases at any time and from any location.

This digital transformation is especially significant in the context of Western Uttar Pradesh. Internet penetration, smartphone usage, and digital literacy are all steadily rising in the region, which includes both fast urbanising cities and semi-urban areas. Because of this, consumers—particularly women—are looking more and more to the internet for their personal care and beauty needs. However, socioeconomic conditions, awareness levels, and trust in digital systems can all affect the rate and pattern of adoption.

Examining the variables influencing online purchasing behaviour in this particular regional context becomes essential in light of these developments. In addition to advancing scholarly research, an understanding of these dynamics will offer useful information to companies and marketers looking to increase their market share in the dynamic D2C beauty environment.

Global consumer markets have seen a fundamental upheaval in recent years due to the quick development of digital technologies. The beauty and personal care industry is one of the most dynamic and rapidly changing sectors among those undergoing this change. The sector, which has historically relied on physical retail formats including department stores, salons, and neighbourhood shops, has come to embrace digital channels as the main means of product distribution and consumer interaction. In addition to changing how goods are advertised and sold, this shift has had a big impact on how customers look for information, weigh their options, and decide what to buy.

The rise of the Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) business model is one of the main forces behind this change.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, which operated as a catalyst for behavioural change across all consumer segments, the acceleration of digital adoption was especially noticeable. Customers were forced to investigate online platforms for their daily needs due to mobility limitations, the temporary shutdown of physical establishments, and increased health concerns. Once thought to be reliant on in-store consultations and physical trials, beauty and personal care goods have seen a significant shift to digital platforms. With the help of advancements in digital payment methods, user-friendly interfaces, and logistics, this forced adoption eventually turned into a regular choice.

The evolving role of the internet is another crucial component of this change. An active and significant marketplace ecology has emerged from what was formerly a passive information source. Before making a purchase, consumers today interact with a variety of digital touchpoints, such as brand websites, mobile applications, social media platforms, and online reviews. Without having to physically engage with the product, consumers are empowered to make informed

decisions thanks to the availability of thorough product descriptions, ingredient information, tutorial videos, and peer reviews. This is especially important in the beauty industry, where perception, trust, and personal significance are important factors.

Online purchasing has become more popular due to a number of driving forces. One of the key motivators is still convenience, since customers may explore and buy goods whenever they want and from any location. Online platforms are also made more appealing by the availability of a larger selection of goods, reasonable pricing, special offers, and tailored recommendations. Influencer endorsements, user-generated reviews, and social media campaigns are examples of digital content that has a significant impact on consumer engagement and buy intentions.

This shift offers a distinctive and perceptive case in the Western Uttar Pradesh regional setting. The area is made up of both traditionally entrenched semi-urban and rural communities and quickly growing urban hubs. Customers in this area are progressively incorporating online shopping into their daily routines due to the rising accessibility of reasonably priced smartphones, enhanced internet connectivity, and growing knowledge of digital services. Women in particular are becoming important players in this change, eagerly searching online marketplaces for cosmetics and personal hygiene items. However, their adoption patterns are still influenced by elements including price sensitivity, worries about product authenticity, trust in digital transactions, and differing degrees of digital literacy.

Furthermore, consumer attitudes and tastes are significantly shaped by Western Uttar Pradesh's cultural and social fabric. Digital exposure frequently interacts with peer recommendations, family influence, and cultural norms to produce a hybrid decision-making process that combines traditional values with contemporary purchasing tendencies. Because of this, it is crucial to research both the technological and sociocultural aspects that influence online purchasing behaviour in this area.

Given these advancements, there is an increasing need to methodically investigate the elements that influence consumers' shift to online D2C beauty product purchases. Gaining an understanding of these factors can help organisations create more successful, regionally tailored strategies and offer valuable insights into changing consumer expectations.

Literature Review:

The literature now in publication shows that a variety of factors, including cultural, social, psychological, and personal aspects, have an impact on consumer purchasing behaviour. These elements have grown to encompass technology and online-specific aspects with the expansion of digital platforms.

The beauty industry has evolved from a product-centric approach to a consumer-centric model, where personalization, sustainability, and transparency play a critical role. Due to rising income levels, urbanisation, and digital penetration, the Indian market has grown quickly.

D2C brands have emerged as key players by leveraging online platforms to offer innovative and customized products. Studies suggest that factors such as trust, convenience, social media influence, and online reviews significantly affect consumer decisions.

Furthermore, digital interaction via influencer marketing and social media platforms has grown to be a significant factor in determining consumer behaviour. Peer reviews and

recommendations, which serve as social evidence and lower perceived risk, are becoming more and more important to consumers.

Consumer buying behavior refers to the processes through which individuals or groups select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services. It is commonly known that a variety of cultural, social, psychological, and personal factors influence this behaviour (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). These factors are always changing in reaction to shifts in the environment, in technology, and in lifestyle choices.

Consumer decision-making has grown more intricate and participatory in the digital sphere. Through digital channels, consumers actively engage in information search, alternative evaluation, and post-purchase feedback. Due to this change, the conventional linear purchasing process is now a multi-phase, non-linear process that is impacted by several online and offline touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Over the past ten years, the beauty and personal care sector has seen tremendous expansion and diversification. Originally focused on improving appearance, the sector today includes more comprehensive elements including wellness, self-care, and preventive health (Sharma et al., 2022). Male consumers are now part of the consumer base in addition to women due to shifting societal standards that reflect changing perspectives on personal care and grooming (Byrne & Milestone, 2022).

The need for specialised and superior solutions has also been fuelled by growing awareness of environmental exposure and skincare.

Additionally, modern consumers demand brands to be transparent, ethical, and aligned with their values, which has prompted businesses to take a more customer-focused strategy (DAS et al., 2022).

A major change in retail strategy may be seen in the rise of the Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) model. Direct-to-consumer (D2C) firms have greater control over pricing, branding, and customer experience by doing away with middlemen (Bhagat & Ravi, 2020).

Due to customers' growing reliance on online platforms for their purchase demands, the COVID-19 epidemic significantly accelerated the adoption of digital technology. During this time, digital channels evolved from being an option to a primary means of commerce.

D2C brands have become more well-known because of their adaptability, creativity, and capacity to react fast to customer feedback. Their emphasis on digital-first tactics has allowed for quick expansion, particularly among younger, tech-savvy customers (Jayapal & Durga, 2020).

Online consumer behavior is influenced by a variety of factors, including perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, and perceived risk (Davis, 1989). These elements influence user acceptability of digital platforms, as demonstrated by the Technology acceptability Model (TAM).

Customers are able to make better judgements because there is a wealth of information available online. But it also makes people more dependent on outside cues like ratings, reviews, and suggestions (Lee & Hong, 2021).

Because buyers must rely on digital interfaces without real product verification, trust is crucial when making purchases online. Building trust is facilitated by elements like safe payment methods, open policies, and dependable delivery services (King et al., 2016).

In the digital marketplace, personalisation has become a major factor in consumer engagement. Customers are more satisfied and loyal when goods and services are catered to their specific

tastes (Kim et al., 2021). Because skin types, tones, and individual demands vary, personalisation is especially crucial in the beauty sector.

Consumer preferences have been greatly impacted by environmental awareness. Eco-friendly, natural, and sustainable products are becoming more and more popular (Lavuri, 2022). Brand attractiveness is also increased by ethical factors like cruelty-free testing and ethical sourcing. Social media and other digital channels are vital in influencing consumer behaviour. Purchase decisions are greatly influenced by user-generated material, peer reviews, and influencers (Livas et al., 2022). When making decisions, younger customers in particular show a greater reliance on digital involvement.

One of the main factors influencing internet purchasing behaviour is trust. Building consumer confidence is facilitated by secure transactions, transparent communication, and trustworthy product information (King et al., 2016). Additionally, trust mediates the relationship between customer happiness and perception (Davis et al., 2021).

One of the main factors contributing to internet shopping's growing popularity is convenience. Easy access, time efficiency, and cross-platform product comparison are important to consumers (Končar et al., 2021). Price, quality, and usability all have an impact on perceived value, which further influences purchasing decisions.

For customers, online reviews and ratings are crucial information sources. While bad ratings can deter purchasing, positive reviews increase trust (Hong et al., 2021). Additionally, influencer marketing has a big impact on how consumers think and behave.

The online shopping experience has been improved by technological advancements including digital payment methods, virtual try-on facilities, and artificial intelligence (Chakraborty et al., 2022). These developments boost consumer confidence in digital transactions by lowering uncertainty.

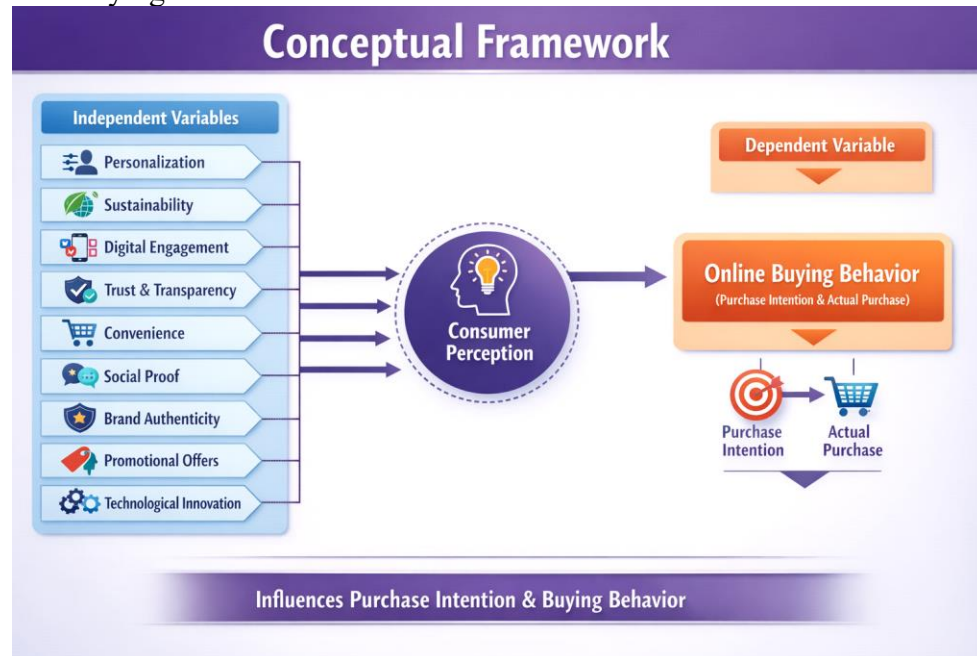
Conceptual Framework

The present study is grounded in the understanding that online buying behavior is influenced by multiple interrelated factors that shape consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions. Drawing from prior literature and the digital consumer behavior paradigm, the framework identifies key independent variables that influence the dependent variable—online Buying Behavior of D2C Beauty Products.

Key Constructs

- Independent Variables
- Personalization
- Sustainability
- Digital Engagement
- Trust & Transparency
- Convenience
- Social Proof
- Brand Authenticity
- Promotional Offers
- Technological Innovation
- Dependent Variable
- Online Buying Behavior (Purchase Intention & Actual Purchase)
- Conceptual Relationship

These variables collectively influence consumer perception, which ultimately leads to purchase intention and actual buying behavior.



Source –Author

Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Personalization has a significant positive impact on online buying behavior of D2C beauty products.

H2: Sustainability positively influences consumer purchase decisions in the D2C beauty segment.

H3: Digital engagement significantly affects online buying behavior.

H4: Trust and transparency have a strong positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

H5: Convenience positively influences online buying behavior.

H6: Social proof (reviews, ratings, influencers) significantly affects purchase decisions.

H7: Brand authenticity positively impacts consumer loyalty and buying behavior.

H8: Promotional offers significantly influence purchase intention.

H9: Technological innovation enhances online shopping experience and positively impacts buying behavior.

Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the factors influencing online buying behavior of D2C beauty products.

5.2 Research Approach

Quantitative Approach (Primary Data Collection)

Variable Type	Variable Name
Independent	Personalization
Independent	Sustainability
Independent	Digital Engagement
Independent	Trust & Transparency
Independent	Convenience
Independent	Social Proof
Independent	Brand Authenticity
Independent	Promotional Offers
Independent	Technological Innovation
Dependent	Online Buying Behavior

Data Analysis and Interpretation (Primary Data)

5.3 Sample Profile (Demographic Analysis)

A total of 150 respondents from Western Uttar Pradesh were surveyed.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–25	60	40%
	26–35	45	30%
	36–45	30	20%
	46+	15	10%
Occupation	Student	50	33%
	Working	70	47%
	Homemaker	30	20%
Area	Urban	90	60%
	Semi-Urban	60	40%

Interpretation

The majority of respondents belong to the 18–35 age group, indicating strong representation of digitally active consumers. A higher proportion of working professionals suggests purchasing power and exposure to online platforms.

5.4 Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Personalization	3	0.82
Trust	3	0.85
Convenience	3	0.8
Social Proof	3	0.78
Overall Scale	20	0.88

Interpretation

All values are above 0.70, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire.

5.5 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personalization	4.12	0.65
Sustainability	3.95	0.72
Digital Engagemen	4.2	0.6
Trust	4.05	0.68
Convenience	4.3	0.55
Social Proof	4.18	0.62
Brand Authenticit	4	0.7
Promotional Offer	4.25	0.58
Technology	4.1	0.64
Buying Behavior	4.22	0.59

Interpretation

Convenience (Mean = 4.30) is the strongest influencing factor
Followed by Promotional Offers and Social Proof
Sustainability shows slightly lower but still positive influence

5.6 Correlation Analysis

Variables	Buying Behavior
Personalization	0.62
Sustainability	0.55
Digital Engagemen	0.68
Trust	0.72
Convenience	0.75
Social Proof	0.7
Brand Authenticit	0.66
Promotional Offer	0.73
Technology	0.69

Interpretation

All variables show positive correlation
Convenience (0.75) and Promotional Offers (0.73) are strongest
Trust and Social Proof also show high influence

5.7 Regression Analysis

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
0.82	0.67	0.65

Interpretation

Model explains 67% variance in buying behavior

Indicates strong predictive power

5.8 ANOVA Table

Source	F	Sig.
Regression	45.32	0

Interpretation

The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Coefficient Table

Variable	Beta	Sig.
Personalization	0.18	0.02
Sustainability	0.1	0.05
Digital Engageme	0.2	0.01
Trust	0.22	0
Convenience	0.25	0
Social Proof	0.19	0.01
Brand Authenticit	0.16	0.03
Promotional Offer	0.23	0
Technology	0.21	0.01

5.9 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Result
H1	Accepted
H2	Accepted
H3	Accepted
H4	Accepted
H5	Accepted
H6	Accepted
H7	Accepted
H8	Accepted
H9	Accepted

Conclusion

The current study offers a thorough insight of how consumers' online purchasing habits for Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) beauty items are changing, especially in the setting of Western Uttar Pradesh. The results unequivocally show that the shift from traditional retail to digital platforms is a long-term behavioural change brought about by advances in technology and shifting consumer demands.

According to the report, consumer decision-making is greatly influenced by elements like convenience, trust, promotional offers, digital interaction, and personalisation. Convenience and trust stand out as the most important factors, promoting both initial adoption and recurring purchases. Younger customers' awareness and preferences are greatly influenced by digital engagement, particularly through social media and influencer connections.

However, conventional factors like perceived risk and price sensitivity still have an impact on purchasing decisions, suggesting a hybrid consumer attitude. Modern purchasing behaviour is defined by this combination of emotional influence and logical assessment.

Overall, the study finds that D2C beauty consumers' online purchasing habits are varied and dynamic. To be competitive, businesses need to implement integrated strategies that incorporate customer-centric methods, trust-building mechanisms, and technical innovation.

8. Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations even if it provides insightful information:

- The study's focus on Western Uttar Pradesh may limit the applicability of its conclusions to other areas.
- Despite being sufficient, the sample size might not accurately reflect the whole population.
- Because the study uses self-reported data, response bias may be present.
- Because the study is cross-sectional, it is unable to record changes in behaviour over time.

There may be additional affecting elements, but only a few were taken into account.

9. Recommendations and Managerial Consequences

The following recommendations are suggested in light of the findings:

- **Promote Transparency and Trust:** Make sure that product details are clear, reviews are genuine, and payment methods are safe.
- **Boost Digital Engagement:** Make good use of influencer marketing and social media channels.
- **Emphasis on Personalisation:** To improve user experience, provide tailored products and suggestions.
- **Offer Competitive Pricing:** To draw in price-conscious customers, use loyalty programs, discounts, and offers.
- **Boost Convenience:** Improve return policies, shipping times, and website usability.

- Adopt Advanced Technologies: To improve client satisfaction, use data analytics, virtual try-ons, and AI tools.
- Create Regional Strategies: Tailor marketing plans to Western Uttar Pradesh's particular tastes.

10. The Study's Future Scope

The study offers a number of avenues for further investigation:

- For comparison analysis, carry out research in various geographical areas.
- To comprehend how customer behaviour develops over time, employ longitudinal research.
- Use sophisticated statistical methods like regression modelling and SEM.
- Add other variables, such as emotional, psychological, and cultural aspects.
- Contrast traditional retail brands with D2C brands.
- Examine how new technologies like augmented reality and artificial intelligence affect consumer behaviour.

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