

Analyzing Public Perception towards Beauty Creams in District Dir Lower: A Questionnaire-Based Thematic Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i2.758>

Abstract

This study investigates public perception towards the use of beauty creams in District Dir Lower, Pakistan, using a mixed-method approach to collect data through questionnaires. A total of 46 responses have been chosen for analysis. Quantitative responses have been visualized through graphs, while the open-ended questions have been analyzed through the lens of Thematic analysis. The analysis shows that most of the participants prefer such products for protection from sun and UV rays, whitening and glow, curing pigmentation and acne, and general skincare. Most of the respondents have reported positive experiences and good results after using beauty creams, while very few of them mentioned bad experiences with such creams. In addition to this, this research serves as a valuable foundation for future studies interested in the long-term impacts of cosmetic products or the socio-cultural aspects that influence the use of beauty products.

Keywords: Beauty Products, Dir Lower, Thematic Analysis, Questionnaires, Cosmetics.

Introduction

Human beings, especially women, want to look beautiful and to be praised for their physique and a good-looking face. “Beauty has become an absolute religious imperative for women, thus pressuring them to do their best to hold their beauty” (Baudrillard, 2005, as cited in Kaur et al., 2013, p. 62). Different social and psychological studies have shown that our face and body consonance have a crucial role in our social interactions and relationships (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzos, 2023; Hassan, 2022). While advertisements and packaging frequently claim that beauty products will lighten skin and produce a more even complexion, the product names and the inclusion of famous models and celebrities suggest that the products will increase their cultural capital by improving their success, youthfulness, attractiveness, and confidence (Shroff et al., 2018). According to the study of Neelam et al. (2021), cosmetics are used by individuals with varying demographic backgrounds for different reasons: young people primarily use them for aesthetic purposes, while older people tend to use them to fight against the aging signs.

Beauty standards vary from culture to culture. Natural beauty is seen in the same way by all races and cultures, yet it has unique ethnic traits. Various artificial beauty procedures are employed across all cultures to improve natural beauty (Raggio & Adamson, 2022; Khan & Hassan, 2024). The first people to use cosmetics for highlighting a particular body part were the Egyptians, who started using eye paint as early as 3000 B.C. They believed that a person's eye serves as a mirror to his or her soul and can represent either evil or good (Hunt et al., 2011). In certain cultures, food supplies and economic factors have an impact on beauty standards. For instance, corn was a valuable resource in Mayan society, and therefore the Mayans modified their facial features and hair to imitate it (Frederick et al., 2015). The study of Madan et al. (2018) suggests that cultural differences, particularly the individual's perception about their connection to others, impact the likelihood of using these products. Easterners, who are more interdependent, have greater chances to use appearance-related products, while Westerners, less interdependent, may give less attention to using such products. Yoshikawa (2021) stated that women with almond-shaped eyes, black hair, white skin, and a prominent nose are deemed lovely in Japan. In Asia, local cultures were influenced by European colonies, which promoted the idea of whiteness as a beauty standard there. In Bangladesh, due to the need for a "fair bride" in the marriage market, both men and women are attracted to fair skin (Khan, 2020). In Korea, people with white skin color are respected and have historically been regarded as possessing an air of nobility. Likewise, in Indian culture, white skin symbolizes beauty, happiness, and privilege, while black skin is connected to negativity, representing characteristics like dirt, wrongness, and unfairness (Li et al., 2008).

Beauty Products in Asia, and particularly in Pakistan, have a great social and cultural significance. In 2023, with a 41% market share and an industry valuation of US\$190 billion, Asia led the worldwide beauty market (Khan & Hassan, 2024; BDA Partners, 2024). The efficacy and inventiveness of Japanese and Korean beauty trends have gained global attention. While J-Beauty stresses simple skincare with components like rice bran, green tea, and sake, K-Beauty's multi-step treatments include moisturizing sheet masks. (Beauty Packaging, 2024). In Pakistan, the beauty and personal care market is projected to develop at a rate of 2.18% annually (2025-2030) and produce US\$5.10 billion in 2025. The largest segment is personal care at US\$2.52 billion, with 7.3% made up by online sales. Per person, Pakistan's market is expected to grow to US\$20.40 (Statista, 2024).

Similarly, the goal of this study is to understand how females in the Dir Lower district of Pakistan perceive and use beauty creams, with a focus on factors such as personal preferences, skin-related needs, and health outcomes. By examining these behaviors, this study enhances our understanding of consumer preferences and the evolving beauty landscape (Fatima et al. 2024). The findings will aid cosmetics brands in developing products that cater to local needs. Additionally, the study will help consumers make informed decisions by exploring the effects of beauty products on skin health, self-perception, and overall well-being. Furthermore, by illuminating local consumer preferences, skincare requirements, and behavioral patterns, the research findings can serve as a valuable foundation for future academic studies. Future researchers may build upon this work to conduct more in-depth or comparative studies if they are interested in marketing strategies, dermatological effects, or sociocultural aspects of beauty standards.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the public behavior towards the use of beauty creams in the district of Dir Lower.
2. To investigate consumer satisfaction and expectations about beauty creams.

Research Questions

1. How does the public behave towards the use of beauty creams in district Dir Lower?
2. What are consumers' expectations of beauty creams, and to what extent are they satisfied with the results?

Literature Review

Various studies have investigated societal influences, product preferences, and consumer behavior due to the rising need for beauty products. In this literature review, the role of beauty goods, cultural differences in beauty standards, and consumer purchasing behavior are all examined through existing studies, particularly in Asia, with a focus on Pakistan.

The Effect of Society and Culture on Beauty Perception

Hunt et al. (2011) investigated the effects of society and culture on customer behavior and beauty standards in the cosmetics sector. The study emphasized the cultural variations of beauty standards and how the perception of beauty changed across time and place. Individuals often adopt beauty standards unconsciously as a result of being affected by dominant societal conventions. Definitions of beauty evolve with society—what is deemed attractive today, may become outdated tomorrow. The study highlighted how beauty standards are dynamic and raises questions about how they can develop further in the future.

Perceptions and Attitudes of Consumers Regarding Cosmetics During COVID-19

Aziz et al. (2021) analyzed Malaysian consumers' attitudes toward cosmetics during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing out important patterns and issues. While women are the main consumers, digital media has increased male usage of cosmetics. The main purpose of using cosmetic products is to enhance beauty, however, a lot of consumers lack awareness about the product ingredients and the possible health risks, especially when it comes to fake goods. The users prioritize attractiveness over safety, even though they are aware of the risks. The study also focused on hygiene concerns regarding cosmetic sharing during the pandemic and found that factors like age, income, marital status, and religion affect purchasing behavior. The findings of the study emphasized increased consumer awareness and the need for stronger regulations to protect them from using harmful or low-quality cosmetic products.

Factors Affecting Women's Purchase Behavior for Organic Cosmetics

Ishaq et al. (2021) found important factors affecting Pakistani women's decisions to purchase organic cosmetics. Health consciousness was an essential factor, as consumers favored organic products because they were worried about the dangerous ingredients in traditional cosmetics. Another key factor was environmental sustainability, with many people choosing eco-friendly products. Product quality information was another important consideration that aided consumers in making the right decisions. The need for uniqueness had a small impact, as many women want to maintain their distant self-image through organic cosmetics. The consumers did not consider price in purchasing, as they were willing to pay more for quality organic products. The study suggested that marketers should highlight both health and environmental advantages of organic cosmetics to affect customer behavior.

Methods and Materials

In this study, the researchers have used a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a thorough understanding of consumer behavior regarding beauty cream usage in District Lower Dir, Pakistan. The quantitative data, which was gathered through a structured questionnaire, provided measurable information about usage patterns, while the open-ended responses gave a deeper comprehension of personal experiences, expectations, and perceptions. This methodological blend was selected to do a more statistically and contextually rich analysis of the data.

Data Collection

The data was collected using a questionnaire that contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaires were distributed among female participants at *Riphah International University*, *Malakand University*, and *Gulabad Degree College*, as well as to several randomly selected individuals. A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed among the participants: 20 were given to female participants at *Malakand University*, 20 at *Gulabad*

Degree College, 15 at Riphah International University, and 5 were given to random participants. Then, out of those, a total number of 46 responses were selected carefully for analysis based on relevance and completeness. The following table shows the demographics of the participants:

Table 1: Demography of the Participants

Number of Participants	Age: 18-20	21-25	26-30	31-40
46	18	23	2	3

Data Analysis

The data, gathered through questionnaires among female participants, was analyzed by employing a mixed-method approach. The quantitative data collected through closed-ended questions was structured and visually represented using bar charts.

For qualitative data, the researchers used thematic analysis to understand and interpret open-ended answers. This process included reading each response attentively, coding any recurrent thoughts or statements, and arranging related codes into more general and broader themes. The themes were then utilized by researchers to analyze why people use beauty creams, their expectations, and experiences around the use of such beauty creams. This method made it easy and possible to identify important patterns, such as their satisfaction levels, the reasons behind using those creams, and their perceptions about the efficacy of the product.

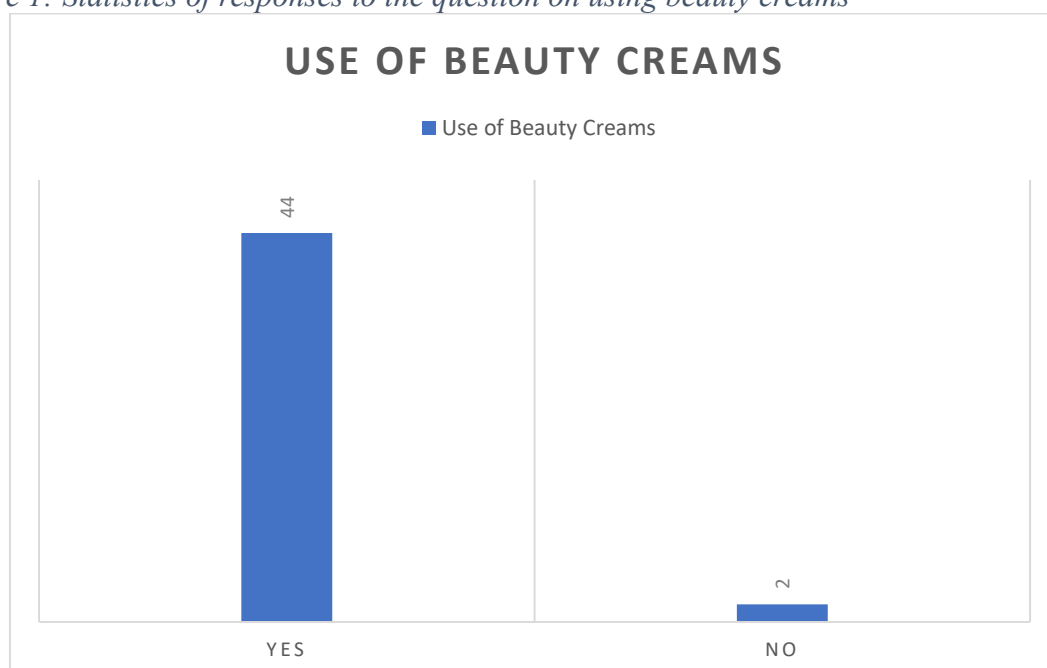
Through the combination of numerical patterns and detailed textual insights, the data analysis guaranteed a more comprehensive picture and understanding of the customer behavior and attitudes regarding beauty creams in the local context of District Dir Lower, Pakistan

Results and Discussion

By thoroughly analyzing the responses, the following key themes were identified to understand consumer perceptions and usage of beauty creams in the district Dir Lower:

Number of Participants Using/Not Using Beauty Creams

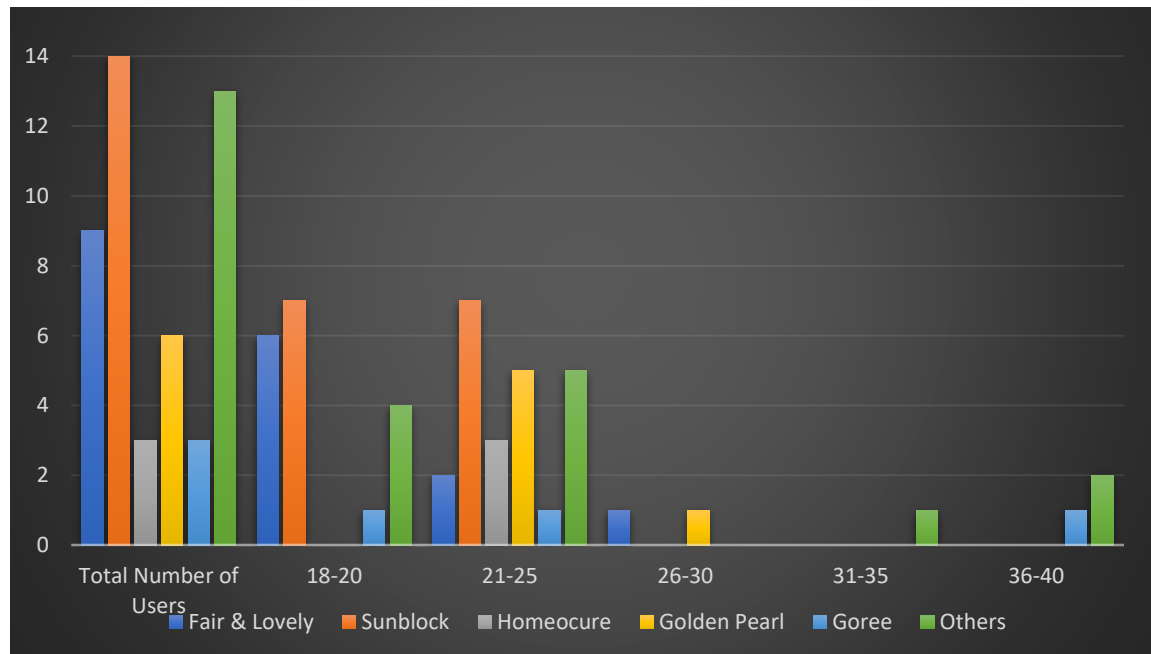
Figure 1: Statistics of responses to the question on using beauty creams



According to the data, the majority of the participants, up to 44, mentioned using cream for different reasons. The reasons are described below. However, two of our participants also stated that they do not use beauty creams at all for some reasons. One participant said, “I do not use creams because they often do not meet one’s expectations and they are harmful for the face” (participant 33), while another mentioned, “I do not like using creams, and I feel allergic to such creams” (participant 41).

Which is the most Used Beauty Cream?

Figure 2: Frequency of beauty cream’ users by different age groups



Health and Skin Protection

A large portion of respondents emphasized that the main reason they use beauty creams is to protect their skin, particularly from harmful UV rays. Some respondents mentioned they use creams to prevent general skin damage and protect their skin in a polluted environment. *Sunblock* was frequently mentioned to be used for such purposes, with creams like *Baby Lotion*, *Goree*, and *Dermive Lotion* also used by some participants. As one of the participants said, “I use Sunblock to protect it from sun rays, which can damage our skin” (participant 14). The participants were satisfied using creams for such purposes and had fulfilled their needs. Notably, the age group of 18-25 demonstrated a higher tendency to use Sunblock products, which shows a growing awareness regarding UV protection and its importance for long-term skin care among young adults. These responses demonstrate that consumers are not only seeking cosmetic benefits but also regard these products as a way to maintain the health of their skin daily.

Skin Treatment and Healing

Several respondents mentioned using creams for treating specific skin problems such as pigmentation, acne, scars, and melasma. The creams used by participants for such purposes include *Clariderm*, *Biofade*, *Fair & Lovely*, *Goree*, *Golden Pearl*, *Homeocure*, and some medicated products. Nine of the users have reported positive outcomes, while one person has reported a bad experience, saying “it did not cure my acne, instead, it grew hairs on my face” (participant 27). This theme shows that many consumers rely on beauty creams as a solution to skin conditions. The therapeutic application of these creams implies that consumers expect medicinal-like efficacy from cosmetics, blending aesthetic preferences with practical therapeutic qualities.

Enhancing Beauty and Appearance

Many of the participants also stated that the reason they use beauty creams is to improve their look and appearance, mentioning effects like whiteness, glow, freshness, and even skin tone. The creams used to achieve this goal include *Golden Pearl*, more frequently mentioned than others, *Homeocure*, *Fair & Lovely*, *BB cream*, *Sunblock*, and *Goree*, based on the responses. Thirteen of them used cream for such a purpose, and all of them reported that the creams met their expectations. As one of the respondents stated, “I use this cream for whitening, and it was very effective and gave me good results” (participant 16). This shows that a major drive behind using creams is still the wish to improve visible beauty, and also highlights the cultural importance given to outward appearance in the district of Dir Lower.

Natural Appearance and Moisturizing

Though fewer in number, some of the participants mentioned a natural look, moisturizing, and softening the skin as reasons for using the beauty creams. According to the responses, *Fair & Lovely* and *21 Creme* were used by participants for these purposes and reported good results after using these creams. As one respondent said, “I use this cream because it feels natural” (participant 19), while another mentioned “I use it for skin softness” (participant 23). These users seemed to be choosing non-greasy, light-on-skin lotions and gentle creams that let them feel comfortable and confident in their skin. This group valued daily skin care and chose creams that promote natural freshness and moisture without severe chemicals or artificial effects.

Negative Experiences and Bad Effects

While the majority of the participants had positive or neutral experiences and the creams met their expectations, a few of them reported bad experiences with the creams. As one respondent mentioned, “I used the cream to cure my acne and pimples, but it did not cure it, instead, it grew hairs on my face” (participant 27). Two participants reported bad effects of creams due to excessive usage, like one said “I use the cream to clear my face from pimples and scars, but its more use make my face’s skin weaker” (participant 43), while another stated “I use the cream to make my skin less porous. It had good effects, but its excessive use made my face dry” (participant 38). One of the participants also reported mixed experience saying, “Initially the cream had good results, but now my skin is getting a bit worse” (participant 29).

Conclusion

The study aimed to understand and find out how women in District Dir Lower, Pakistan, use and perceive beauty creams. The goal is to explore and know why people utilize these creams, what they want to get out of them, and to what extent they are satisfied with the results after using those creams. According to the results, the majority of participants used creams for purposes such as skin whitening, sun protection, curing skin issues like acne and pigmentation, and achieving a glowing or natural appearance. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the participants used those products for purposes such as protection from sun and UV rays, skin glow and whitening, and curing certain skin issues like pigmentation and acne. Most of the users reported positive experiences with the creams and felt pleased and satisfied with the outcomes, while very few of them stated that they had negative experiences with the creams, mentioning some bad effects on their skin. In addition to this, it was also noted that most people who used these products were between the ages of 21 and 25. The responses showed that the majority of participants linked their use of beauty creams to skin-related needs and personal preferences. However, it is also probable that these choices were shaped by societal influences. Since no one specifically mentioned social pressure, the findings suggest that, if such impacts are there, they may be internalized or not acknowledged by the users themselves. The study's findings are significant because they shed light on what local customers desire from beauty products and how they experience them. This information can be helpful and useful for cosmetic companies to enhance their goods to better suit local demands. Even so, the study focused on a limited population; it offers a valuable base and foundation for future studies. It can be helpful for future researchers who can use it to evaluate

and compare consumer behavior across different regions, examine the long-term impacts of beauty creams, or delve deeper into the motivations underlying product selections.

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