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## Analyzing The Marketing Mix Of Otc Dermatology Products In India

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### ABSTRACT

The Indian Over-the-Counter (OTC) dermatology market has been growing rapidly due to increased consumer awareness, digital accessibility, and changing lifestyle patterns. This research aims to analyze how the marketing mix (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion) influences consumer purchasing decisions in this segment. The study identifies key factors such as product efficacy, competitive pricing, online and offline distribution channels, and digital promotional strategies. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 200 Indian consumers, employing a quantitative research methodology. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests via SPSS software. The findings reveal that dermatologist-recommended products and clinically proven formulations significantly impact purchase intent. Competitive pricing and discount offer play a crucial role, while e-commerce platforms are emerging as dominant retail channels. Additionally, social media and influencer marketing have a notable influence on brand trust and engagement. The study concludes that brands need to optimize their marketing strategies by focusing on quality formulations, personalized pricing models, and targeted digital promotions. The findings have significant implications for companies aiming to enhance consumer engagement and brand loyalty in the OTC dermatology sector. Future research can explore AI-driven marketing strategies and regional variations in consumer behavior.

**Keywords:** OTC dermatology, marketing mix, consumer behavior, pricing strategies, digital marketing, self-medication, India

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The Over-the-Counter (OTC) dermatology market in India has seen tremendous growth in recent years, driven by changing consumer preferences, increasing skin health awareness, and the rising demand for self-medication. Traditionally, dermatological treatments were primarily prescription-based, requiring medical consultations. However, with increased access to information, advancements in skincare technology, and the influence of digital marketing, consumers are now more inclined to purchase dermatology products directly from pharmacies, supermarkets, and online platforms without medical supervision.

The rise of online shopping, coupled with aggressive marketing strategies by leading skincare brands, has further accelerated this trend. OTC dermatology products include acne treatments, sunscreens, anti-aging creams, moisturizers, and skin-lightening agents. These products cater to a wide range of skin concerns, offering convenience and affordability to consumers.

As a rapidly expanding market, understanding the key factors influencing consumer decisions in purchasing OTC dermatology products is crucial for brands looking to optimize their marketing strategies. The marketing mix (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion) plays a vital role in shaping consumer choices and determining market success.

### Problem Statement

Despite the rapid growth of the OTC dermatology sector in India, there is limited research on the effectiveness of marketing mix strategies in influencing consumer purchase behavior. Companies invest heavily in product development, pricing strategies, distribution networks, and promotional activities, but the extent to which these factors impact consumer decisions remains unclear. Additionally, while digital marketing has become a dominant force in product promotion, its actual effectiveness in driving consumer engagement and conversions in the dermatology sector needs further exploration.

This study aims to fill this research gap by analyzing how the 4Ps of marketing influence consumer behavior in the Indian OTC dermatology market. It will explore which marketing elements have the strongest impact and provide insights into optimizing strategies to enhance market competitiveness.

### Objectives

This research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the impact of product attributes, such as formulation, dermatologist recommendations, and brand reputation, on consumer purchase decisions.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of pricing strategies, including discounts, premium pricing, and perceived value, in shaping consumer preferences.
3. To assess the role of distribution channels (pharmacies, e-commerce, supermarkets) in consumer accessibility and purchase behavior.
4. To examine the influence of promotional strategies, including digital marketing, influencer endorsements, and traditional advertising, on consumer engagement and brand trust.

## Hypothesis

To systematically analyze the impact of the marketing mix on consumer purchase behavior, the study tests the following hypotheses:

- **H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):** The marketing mix (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion) has no significant impact on consumer purchase decisions for OTC dermatology products in India.
- **H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):** The marketing mix (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion) has a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions for OTC dermatology products in India.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a detailed analysis of existing research on OTC dermatology products, marketing strategies, and consumer behavior.

### Key Trends in the OTC Dermatology Market

Singh (2012) emphasized that the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) are interconnected in determining the success of OTC dermatology brands. Companies that effectively balance these components can create a strong brand presence and increase consumer loyalty. Recent market reports indicate that demand for sunscreens, anti-aging creams, acne treatments, and skin hydration products has surged due to changing environmental conditions and lifestyle preferences.

### Product and Brand Influence

Research by Dr. Dileep M. Pawar (2023) underscores the significance of consumer education in driving product preference. The study revealed that informed consumers tend to choose dermatologist-recommended products and clinically validated formulations over generic alternatives. This supports the notion that brand credibility and product efficacy are key determinants of consumer trust and purchase intent.

Similarly, Anneke Andriessen PhD (2021) discusses the need for tailored OTC acne treatments, particularly for Asian skin, reinforcing the importance of customized product formulations. Abhisek Pal (2020) further highlights the growing influence of branding in the Indian cosmetics industry, where emotional and social values impact consumer choices.

### Pricing Strategies and Consumer Sensitivity

A study conducted by Rakesh Kumar Kashyap (2021) found that marketing strategies and accessibility play a crucial role in the popularity of OTC dermatology products. Consumers often rely on affordability and brand reputation when making purchasing decisions. The study emphasizes the need for clear product labeling, effective advertising, and strong consumer engagement to maintain long-term market presence.

Our research aligns with these findings, as a significant proportion of respondents indicated that pricing strategies (e.g., "Buy one, get one free" and direct price discounts) directly impact brand switching tendencies. However, the chi-square analysis in our study found no significant correlation between income levels and responsiveness to price discounts, suggesting a need for broader, non-segmented pricing strategies. Similar findings were observed by Kalyani Rajput (2022), who analyzed the impact of changing pharmaceutical marketing trends on pricing strategies and consumer preferences.

## Role of Distribution Channels in Market Reach

The proliferation of e-commerce platforms has revolutionized consumer access to OTC dermatology products. According to a study by Dwivedi (2015), the Indian OTC drug market has expanded due to affordability and convenience, though challenges such as low rural penetration persist.

Our study corroborates this, showing that while 68.5% of respondents purchase products online, 63.5% still rely on physical retail outlets. Similarly, research by K.B. Nalina (2023) highlights the increasing consumer awareness of Ayurvedic skincare products, underscoring the role of distribution channels in reaching diverse market segments. Additionally, Miss. Neha Chaudhari (2020) examined how consumer perceptions and digital marketing have influenced purchasing decisions in OTC pharmaceuticals, emphasizing the significance of digital sales platforms.

## Promotional Strategies and Their Effectiveness

Advertising and promotional strategies are crucial in driving consumer engagement. A study by Ayu Chrisniyanti (2022) found that social media marketing significantly impacts skincare product purchases, particularly among younger demographics. The findings suggest that digital campaigns and influencer marketing play a vital role in consumer decision-making.

Our study reinforces this trend, indicating that 45% of respondents consider social media endorsements an influential factor in their purchasing decisions. However, traditional marketing methods, such as TV commercials and in-store promotions, remain relevant, particularly among consumers over 40 years old. Furthermore, Sahni (2017) analyzed the success of The Himalaya Drug Company, emphasizing how innovative marketing campaigns and social responsibility initiatives enhance brand credibility and consumer trust. Additionally, Bharathi (2022) studied Himalaya Wellness Company's Ayurvedic product marketing strategies, highlighting their focus on natural ingredients and consumer trust-building.

## Gaps in Existing Research

Despite the growing body of research, certain gaps remain:

- **Influencer Marketing Impact:** While studies indicate the role of digital influencers, there is limited quantitative analysis of how their promotions translate into actual sales conversions.
- **Regional and Cultural Variations:** The impact of cultural and geographic factors on consumer preferences for OTC dermatology products remains underexplored.
- **AI and Personalization:** Future research could investigate how AI-driven personalized recommendations affect long-term brand loyalty in the dermatology sector.
- **Brand Competitiveness:** Limited comparative research exists on multiple OTC dermatology brands and their differentiation strategies.
- **Rural vs. Urban Consumer Behavior:** While this study focuses on urban consumers, rural purchasing patterns remain largely unknown.
- **Effectiveness of AI-Based Marketing:** Understanding how AI-powered chatbots and personalized recommendations impact sales conversions is still an area requiring further study.

## Areas for Further Research

To build upon existing literature and address the identified gaps, future research should explore:

- **A comparative study on different OTC dermatology brands** to evaluate their marketing effectiveness, differentiation strategies, and consumer loyalty levels.
- **The impact of AI-driven dermatology consultations and recommendation systems** on consumer satisfaction and purchase behavior.
- **Cultural and regional differences in OTC dermatology product preferences**, including climate-specific needs and traditional influences on skincare habits.
- **The sustainability movement in dermatology products**, focusing on how eco-friendly branding affects consumer trust and long-term engagement.
- **The role of social media influencers in dermatology marketing**, including the conversion rates of influencer-led promotions compared to traditional advertising campaigns.
- **Subscription-based dermatology models**, analyzing how recurring product delivery services influence brand loyalty and customer retention.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Study Design

This research employs a **quantitative research methodology** using a **survey-based descriptive study** to analyze the impact of the marketing mix (4Ps) on consumer purchase decisions in the OTC dermatology market. The study follows a structured approach to collect and analyze data, making it suitable for understanding consumer preferences, pricing sensitivity, and promotional effectiveness. The research does not include experimental or qualitative methods, as the focus is on statistical analysis of consumer behavior patterns.

### Data Collection

Data was collected using a **structured questionnaire** distributed through both **online and offline channels**:

- **Online Surveys:** Conducted via Google Forms and shared through email and social media platforms.
- **Offline Surveys:** Conducted in pharmacies, supermarkets, and skincare retail outlets.
- The questionnaire contained **13 close-ended questions** covering aspects such as product preference, pricing sensitivity, distribution channel influence, and promotional impact.

### Sampling Techniques

#### 1. Population:

The population for this study consists of **Indian consumers who purchase or have purchased OTC dermatology products**, such as acne treatments, moisturizers, sunscreens, and anti-aging creams. The study considers individuals across different age groups, income levels, and geographic locations.

## 2. Sampling Unit:

The sampling unit consists of **individual consumers** who actively make purchasing decisions for OTC dermatology products in India.

## 3. Sample Size:

A total of **200 respondents** were surveyed to ensure a reliable dataset that represents consumer behavior patterns.

## 4. Sampling Methods:

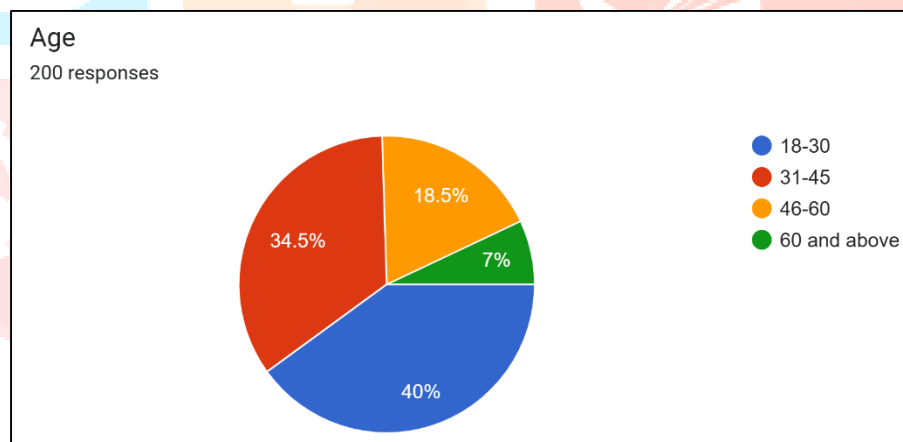
This study uses a **Stratified Random Sampling Method**, where the population was divided into **subgroups (strata)** based on key demographic factors such as **age, income level, and location (urban vs. rural)**. Respondents were randomly selected from each stratum to ensure a balanced and representative sample. This method enhances the accuracy of findings by capturing diverse consumer segments.

## Data Analysis

The survey involved **200 respondents (132 males and 68 females)** who completed the questionnaire through Google Forms. The responses were systematically recorded and analyzed using statistical tools to ensure accuracy and reliability. Graphical representations were generated from Google Forms data to provide a clear visual interpretation of the findings.

### Q.1 Age:

The survey results show:



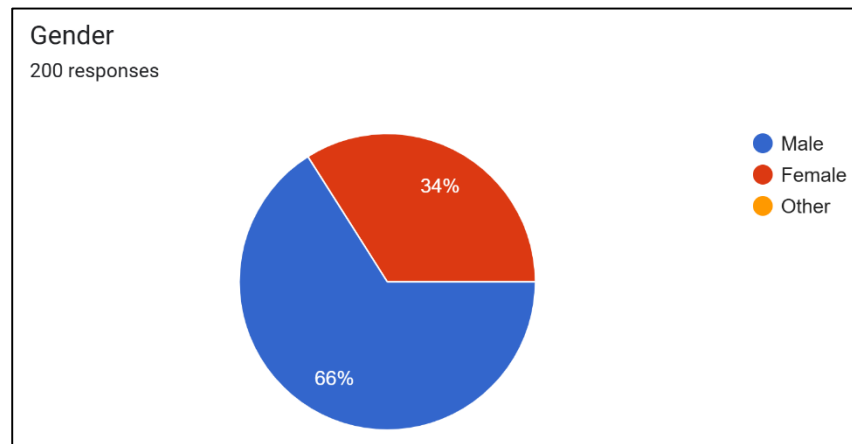
### Interpretation:

The majority of respondents belong to the **18-30 age group (40%)**, indicating strong engagement with OTC dermatology products among young adults, likely driven by skincare concerns and cosmetic appeal. The **31-45 age group (34.5%)** also shows significant interest, possibly for anti-aging and skin maintenance. Older age groups (**46-60: 18.5%**, **60+: 7%**) have lower engagement, suggesting lesser reliance on these products.



## Q.2 Gender:

The survey results are as follows:

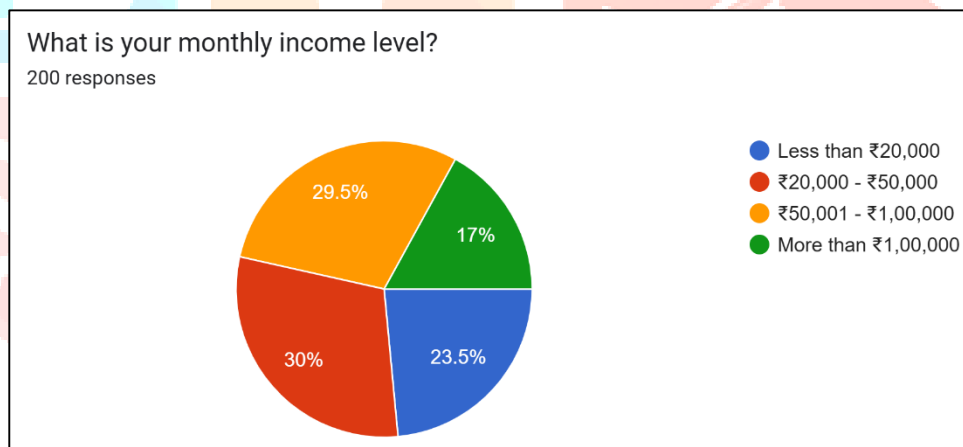


### Interpretation:

The majority of respondents are **male (66%)**, indicating a higher engagement of men in OTC dermatology product purchases. **Females (34%)** also form a significant portion, reflecting growing skincare awareness among both genders.

## Q.3 What is your monthly income level?

The survey results are:

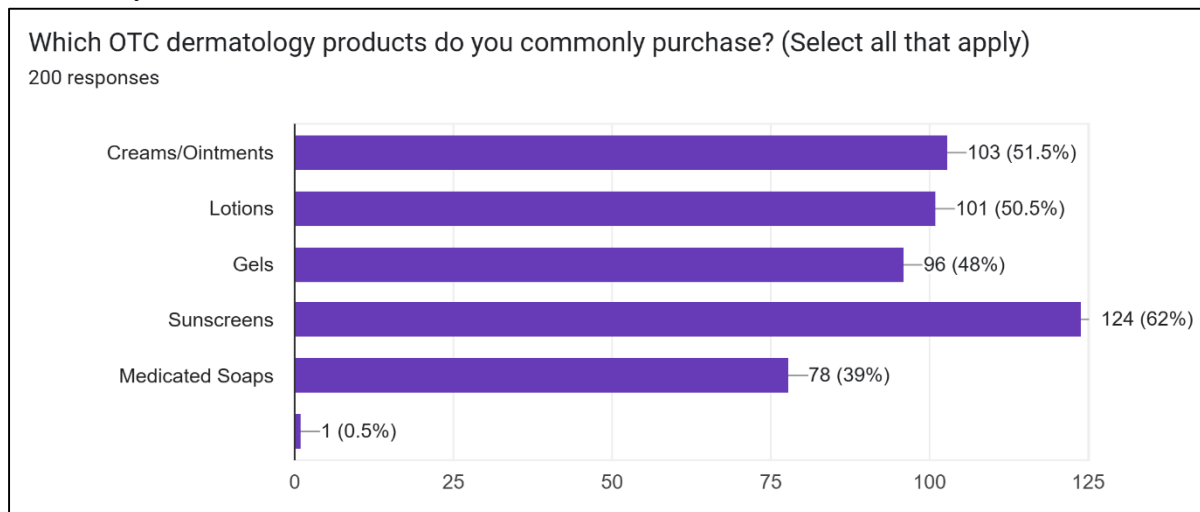


### Interpretation:

The majority of respondents fall in the **₹20,000 - ₹50,000 (30%)** and **₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000 (29.5%)** income groups, indicating a strong middle-income consumer base for OTC dermatology products. **23.5%** earn **less than ₹20,000**, suggesting a price-sensitive segment, while **17%** earn **more than ₹1,00,000**, representing a niche for premium skincare. This highlights the need for balanced pricing strategies catering to both affordability and premium quality.

#### Q.4 Which OTC dermatology products do you commonly purchase? *(Select all that apply)*

The survey results are as follows:

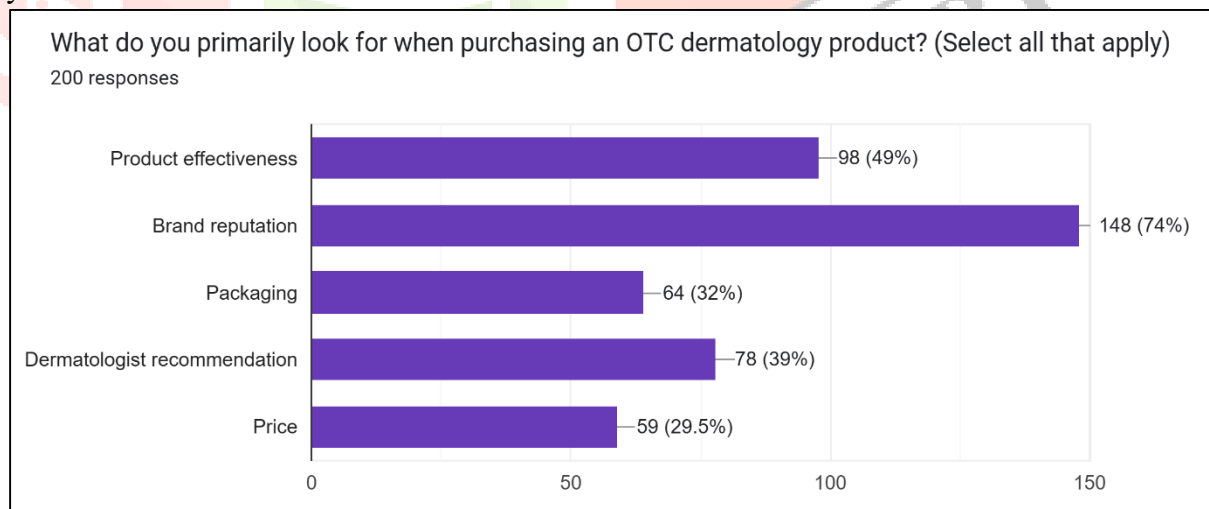


#### Interpretation:

**Sunscreens (62%)** are the most commonly purchased OTC dermatology products, highlighting strong consumer awareness of sun protection. **Creams/Ointments (51.5%)** and **Lotions (50.5%)** are also widely used, likely for hydration and treatment purposes. **Gels (48%)** follow closely, suggesting preference for lightweight formulations. **Medicated Soaps (39%)** have a moderate demand, indicating a niche market for targeted skincare solutions.

#### Q.5 What do you primarily look for when purchasing an OTC dermatology product? *(Select all that apply)*

The survey results are as follows:



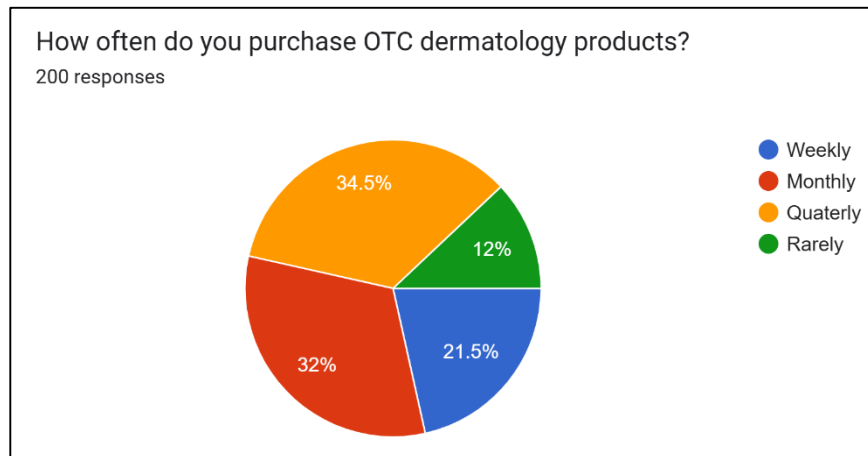
#### Interpretation:

**Brand reputation (74%)** is the most influential factor, indicating strong consumer trust in established brands. **Product effectiveness (49%)** follows, highlighting the importance of results-driven choices. **Dermatologist recommendations (39%)** also play a significant role, reflecting the value of expert advice. **Packaging (32%)** and **price (29.5%)** are less critical but still impact consumer decisions.



## Q.6 How often do you purchase OTC dermatology products?

The survey results show:

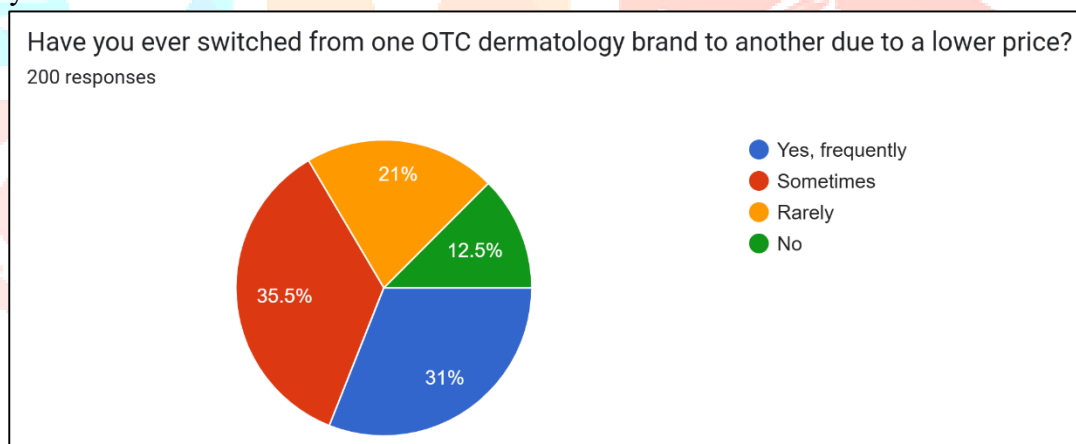


### Interpretation:

Most respondents purchase OTC dermatology products **quarterly (34.5%)** or **monthly (32%)**, indicating regular but not excessive usage. **Weekly buyers (21.5%)** show higher product dependency, possibly for ongoing skincare needs. A smaller group (**12%**) purchases rarely, suggesting occasional or situational use.

## Q.7 Have you ever switched from one OTC dermatology brand to another due to a lower price?

The survey results show:

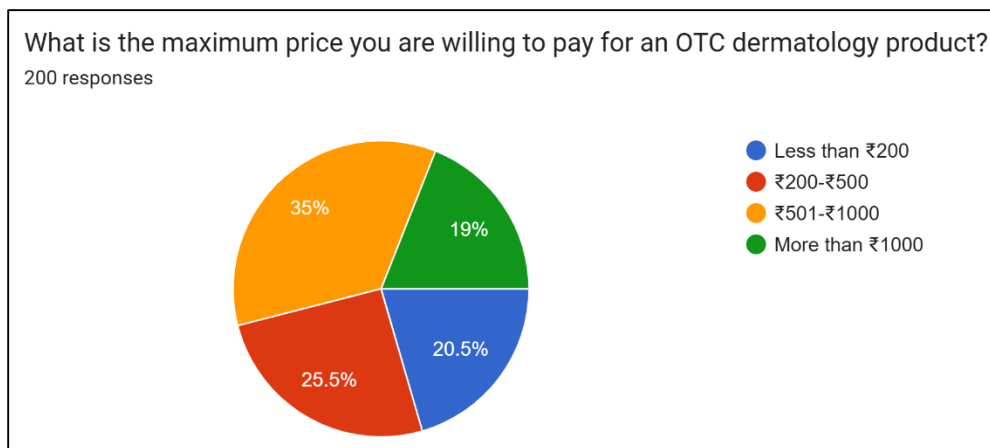


### Interpretation:

A significant portion of respondents (**35.5%**) switch brands **sometimes**, while **31%** do so **frequently**, indicating that price plays a crucial role in brand loyalty. Meanwhile, **21%** rarely switch, and **12.5%** remain loyal regardless of price, suggesting that other factors like brand reputation and product effectiveness influence their choices.

**Q.8 What is the maximum price you are willing to pay for an OTC dermatology product?**

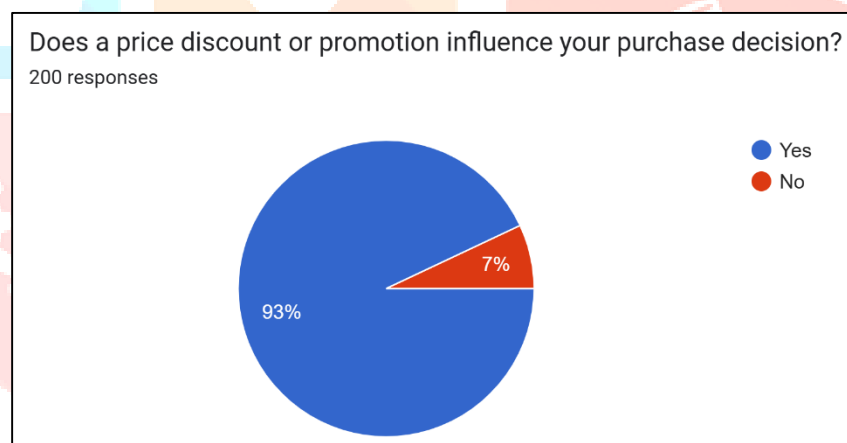
The survey results are:

**Interpretation:**

The majority of respondents (35%) are willing to spend between ₹501-₹1000, indicating a preference for mid-range OTC dermatology products. 25.5% prefer the ₹200-₹500 range, while 20.5% opt for budget-friendly options under ₹200. Only 19% are willing to pay more than ₹1000, suggesting that affordability remains a key factor in purchase decisions.

**Q.9 Does a price discount or promotion influence your purchase decision?**

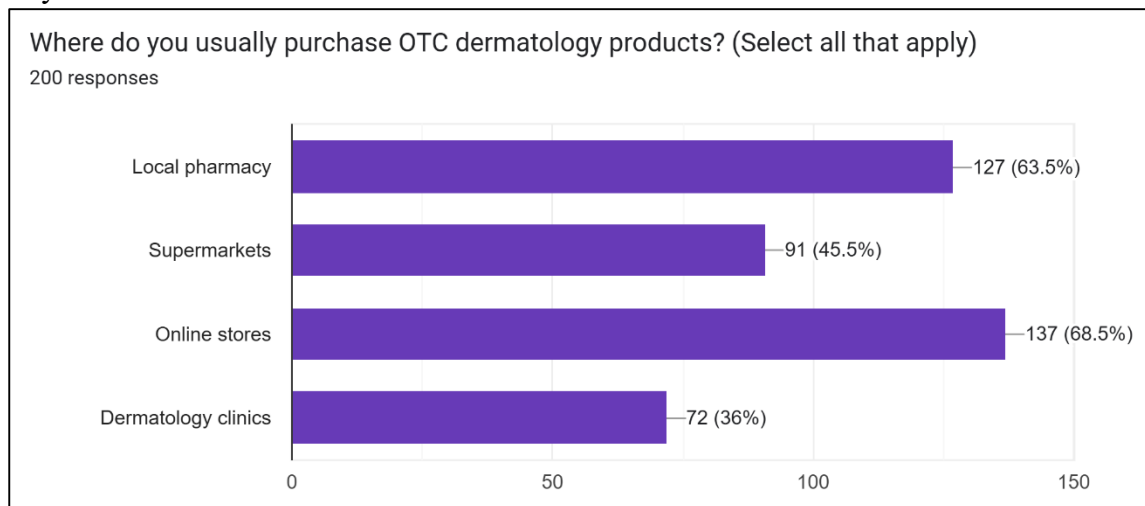
The survey results show:

**Interpretation:**

A significant 93% of respondents stated that price discounts or promotions influence their purchase decisions, highlighting the strong impact of cost-saving offers on consumer behavior. Only 7% remain unaffected by such promotions, indicating that the majority are price-sensitive when purchasing OTC dermatology products.

**Q.10 Where do you usually purchase OTC dermatology products? (Select all that apply)**

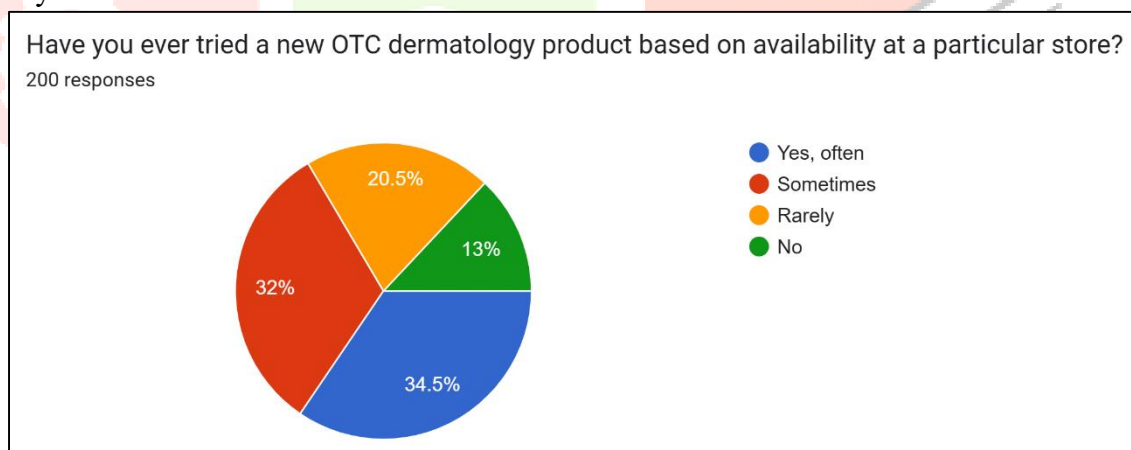
The survey results are as follows:

**Interpretation:**

The majority of respondents prefer **online stores (68.5%)** and **local pharmacies (63.5%)** for purchasing OTC dermatology products, indicating a balance between convenience and accessibility. **Supermarkets (45.5%)** are also a common choice, while **dermatology clinics (36%)** are less preferred, suggesting that most consumers opt for general retail over specialized medical outlets.

**Q.11 Have you ever tried a new OTC dermatology product based on availability at a particular store?**

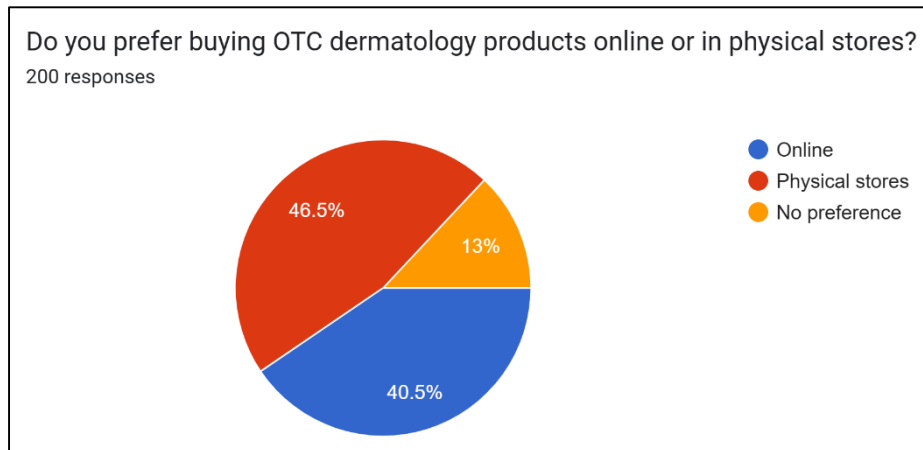
The survey results are:

**Interpretation:**

A significant portion of respondents (**34.5%**) frequently try new OTC dermatology products based on store availability, while **32%** do so occasionally. This indicates that in-store presence plays a key role in influencing consumer choices. However, **20.5%** rarely switch, and **13%** never do, showing a segment of brand-loyal customers.

**Q.12 Do you prefer buying OTC dermatology products online or in physical stores?**

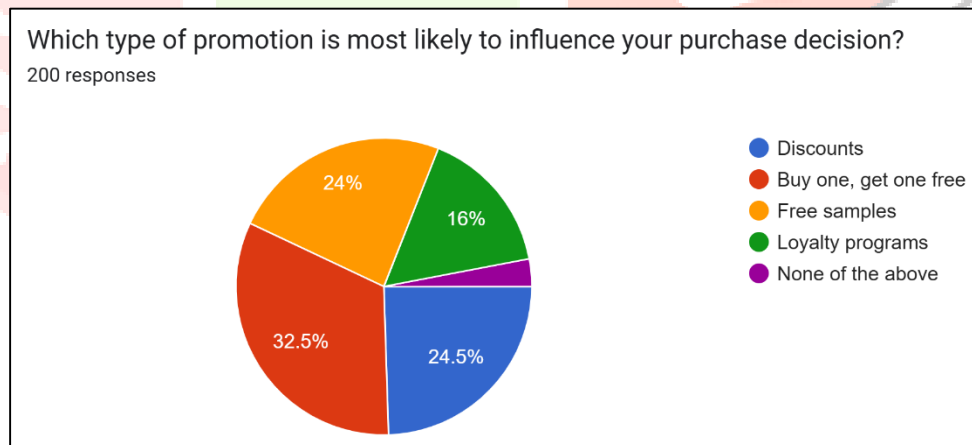
The survey results show:

**Interpretation:**

A majority of respondents (**46.5%**) prefer buying OTC dermatology products from physical stores, likely due to immediate availability and product verification. However, **40.5%** opt for online shopping, highlighting the growing influence of e-commerce. Meanwhile, **13%** have no specific preference, indicating flexibility in their purchasing behavior.

**Q.13 Which type of promotion is most likely to influence your purchase decision?**

The survey results are:

**Interpretation:**

The most influential promotion type is **"Buy one, get one free" (32.5%)**, indicating that consumers are drawn to value-based offers. **Discounts (24.5%)** and **free samples (24%)** also play a key role, showing that affordability and product trials impact purchase decisions. **Loyalty programs (16%)** have a moderate effect, while only **3%** are unaffected by promotions.

## CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

We analyzed survey responses to the question:

### Q. Does a price discount or promotion influence your purchase decision?

The responses were categorized based on **income levels** to examine if there is a significant relationship between the two variables.

#### Step 1: Define the Hypothesis

- **Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** Income level and the influence of price discounts or promotions on purchase decisions are independent (no relationship).
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** Income level influences whether a price discount or promotion affects purchase decisions.

#### Step 2: Select the Test

Since both variables (**income level** and **purchase decision based on discounts**) are categorical, we apply the **Chi-square test of independence**.

#### Step 3: Contingency Table (Observed Data)

Income Level	No	Yes	Total
₹20,000 - ₹50,000	6	54	60
₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000	3	56	59
Less than ₹20,000	3	44	47
More than ₹1,00,000	2	32	34
Total	14	186	200

#### Step 4: Expected Frequencies

If income level and purchase decision were independent, the expected values for each category would be:

Income Level	Expected "No"	Expected "Yes"
₹20,000 - ₹50,000	4.2	55.8
₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000	4.1	54.9
Less than ₹20,000	3.3	43.7
More than ₹1,00,000	2.9	31.1

#### Step 5: Compute the Chi-square Statistic

- The Chi-square formula:  

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$$
- Applying this formula:  

$$\chi^2 = 1.255$$

### Step 6: Compare with Critical Value and Interpret Results

- Degrees of Freedom (df):  
 $df = (\text{rows} - 1) \times (\text{columns} - 1) = (4 - 1) \times (2 - 1) = 3$
- Critical Value at **0.05 Significance Level: 7.815**
- p-value = **0.74**

Since  $1.255 < 7.815$ , and p-value ( $0.74$ )  $> 0.05$ , we **accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ )**.

### Step 7: Conclusion

There is **no statistically significant relationship** between **income level and whether a price discount or promotion influences purchase decisions** for OTC dermatology products in India.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Presentation of Data and Results

The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel, applying descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to identify key patterns. The findings are presented below:

#### 1. Consumer Demographics and Preferences

- Age Distribution:** Young adults aged **18-30 (40%)** represent the largest consumer segment, followed by the **31-45 age group (34.5%)**. Interest declines in older demographics.
- Gender Distribution:** Male respondents (**66%**) outnumbered female respondents (**34%**), suggesting an increasing trend of men investing in skincare.

#### 2. Purchasing Behavior and Preferences

- Income Level and Purchases:** The majority of respondents fall within the **₹20,000 - ₹50,000 (30%)** and **₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000 (29.5%)** brackets, indicating mid-income consumers seek affordability and efficacy.
- Popular OTC Products:** **Sunscreens (62%)** were the most frequently purchased, followed by **creams (51.5%)**, **lotions (50.5%)**, and **gels (48%)**.
- Key Purchase Influencers:** **Brand reputation (74%)** ranked highest, followed by **product effectiveness (49%)** and **dermatologist recommendations (39%)**.

#### 3. Price Sensitivity and Promotional Impact

- Brand Loyalty vs. Price Sensitivity:** **35.5%** of respondents occasionally switch brands for better prices, while **31%** frequently do so.
- Impact of Discounts and Offers:** **93%** of respondents reported that promotional discounts influenced their purchases.
- Preferred Promotions:** **Buy one, get one free (32.5%)** was the most popular, followed by **direct price discounts (24.5%)** and **free samples (24%)**.



#### 4. Preferred Shopping Channels

- **Online platforms (68.5%)** and **local pharmacies (63.5%)** dominate as the preferred shopping destinations.
- **In-store vs. Online:** **46.5%** of consumers prefer in-store shopping, while **40.5%** prefer online.

#### 5. Role of Product Availability in Consumer Choice

- **Impact of Stock Availability:** **34.5%** of consumers often try new products based on availability, while **32%** occasionally experiment with alternatives.

#### 6. Chi-Square Analysis: Price Sensitivity vs. Income Level

The chi-square analysis found **no significant correlation** between income level and consumer responsiveness to price discounts ( $\chi^2 = 1.255$ , p-value = 0.74). This suggests that pricing strategies should cater to all income groups rather than targeting specific financial segments.

### Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

#### 1. Consumer Preferences and Influences

The strong preference for **sunscreens** and **treatment-based skincare** reflects increased awareness of preventive skincare.

#### 2. Price Sensitivity vs. Brand Loyalty

While brand loyalty exists, the high percentage of consumers switching for discounts indicates that **pricing strategies** need to be competitive.

#### 3. Shift in Shopping Behavior

The study confirms an increasing reliance on **e-commerce and pharmacy apps**, emphasizing the need for brands to focus on online distribution.

#### 4. Promotional Effectiveness

Discounts and promotional offers strongly influence purchase behavior, suggesting that brands should focus on **value-based promotions and bundled deals**.

### Critical Analysis: Limitations and Potential Biases

#### 1. Gender Imbalance

With **66% male respondents**, the findings may not fully represent female consumer behavior.

#### 2. Urban-Centric Data Collection

The study focuses on **online consumers**, limiting insights into rural purchasing habits.

#### 3. Potential Response Bias

Consumers may have provided socially desirable responses rather than actual behavior.

#### 4. Lack of Regional Variations

Regional factors like **climate and cultural preferences** were not considered.

## 5. Exclusion of Competitive Analysis

The study focuses on consumer behavior rather than **brand differentiation and competition**.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

### Conclusion

The study highlights key factors influencing consumer behavior in the OTC dermatology market, emphasizing **brand reputation, product effectiveness, and promotional strategies**. While **discounts and offers** play a major role, price sensitivity remains consistent across all income groups.

With **sunscreens, creams, and lotions** leading the demand, brands should continue innovating to meet evolving consumer preferences. The **equal preference for online and offline shopping** underscores the importance of a strong **omnichannel presence**.

### Practical Implications and Suggestions

#### 1. Optimizing Pricing and Promotional Strategies

- Implement “**Buy one, get one free**” and **loyalty programs** to drive repeat purchases.
- Offer **seasonal discounts** for products like sunscreens.
- Use **strategic discounting** to balance affordability and brand positioning.

#### 2. Enhancing Product and Branding Strategies

- Strengthen brand credibility with **dermatologist endorsements and influencer marketing**.
- Develop **specialized dermatology products** for various skin types.
- Highlight unique attributes such as **organic ingredients and clinical validation**.

#### 3. Strengthening Distribution and Consumer Engagement

- Maintain a **strong omnichannel presence**, ensuring online and offline availability.
- Improve **in-store product placement** for impulse purchases.
- Leverage **digital marketing and social media campaigns** to boost brand trust.

### Future Research Directions

- Include **rural consumer behavior** to provide a more comprehensive market view.
- Conduct a **competitive brand analysis** to understand differentiation strategies.
- Explore **seasonal trends and skincare preferences** for better-targeted marketing.

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