

## The Role of Instagram Stories in Influencing Consumer Engagement with Beauty Brands: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract:

Social media has revolutionized marketing for beauty brands globally, and Instagram is a prime example, serving as a virtual beauty counter where consumer choices are greatly influenced. This study focuses on comparing how Instagram Stories affect consumer engagement with local high-end and drugstore beauty brands. Using a mixed-methods approach, we gathered both quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback from consumers. The findings reveal that Instagram Stories significantly boost engagement for all brands, albeit in different ways: high-end brands use them to highlight quality and luxury, while drugstore brands emphasize affordability and promotions. The study reveals that consumer engagement is positively correlated with the narrative quality, content frequency, and viewer interactivity of the stories. These insights contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing within the beauty industry, while also offering actionable strategies for brand managers aiming to optimize their social media presence for increased market engagement.

**Keywords:** Instagram Stories, Consumer Engagement, Beauty Brands, Marketing

### Introduction

In recent years, Instagram has established itself as a critical marketing instrument, paying attention to the fashion and lifestyle industries and primarily to beauty (Fakhreddin and Foroudi, 2022). From the day it was launched in 2010, Instagram changed its character from being just a simple photo-sharing app to a complete tool that unites the two fundamental sections of marketing (Lapresta-Romero et al., 2024), which are direct advertisement and influencer collaborations, plus additional features such as polls, live coverage, and Stories (Ye et al., 2020). Instagram grants marketers different modules where Instagram Stories greatly impact brands' marketing pursuits (Keerakiatwong, Taecharungroj and Döpping, 2023). Apart from that, Stories on Instagram offer a marketer flash and speed in a way that appeals to the present condition of consumer attention in which everything nowadays occurs at high speed (Belanche, Cenjor and Pérez-Rueda, 2019). Digital marketers can exploit the temporary nature of stories to generate a feeling of privilege and the perishable nature of the content that inspires users to engage with the post before it vanishes. Instagram Stories is the unique feature in the context of beauty brands, which allows them to build strong and efficient connections with their audience (VanDerslice, 2016). Besides, Stories' interactivities, like swipe-up links, polls, and questions are good tools that promote more interaction and engagement, thus creating a direct line of communication between brands and consumers (Kim, 2021; Setiawan and Salim,

2024). Instagram Stories are an interactive and immersive tool that allows brands to share content which disappears after just 24 hours. This allows for the feeling of urgency and equally important-exclusivity, to resonate with its viewers (Maar, Kefi and Orhan, 2023). Especially in case of beauty industry where the visual side tremendously influences consumer tastes and engagement (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). The beauty industry in Pakistan which is a driving force in helping the economy grow significantly, has seen an exceptional increase with regards to using social media as a major marketing approach (Khan et al., 2023). A rich cultural background, along with an exploding cohort of digitally-savvy youngsters (Aksar et al., 2024), Pakistani beauty brands are uniquely positioned to use Instagram Stories to capture and engage their audience. This study seeks to explore how Instagram Stories influence consumer engagement with beauty brands, comparing local Pakistani high-end brands like Kashees and Beauty By Amna (BBA) with drugstore brands such as Miss Rose and Glamorous Face. The choice of comparing high-end and drugstore beauty brands in the Pakistani context is motivated by the unique consumer perceptions and interactions evoked by these brand categories. High-end beauty brands normally focus on exclusivity, luxury, and quality, while drugstore brands promote affordability and accessibility (Hernández Villana, 2023). These opposing brand values and positioning strategies likely influence the nature and level of consumer engagement on social media platforms. This study aims to examine the impact of Instagram Stories on boosting consumer engagement with beauty brands. Its objectives involve assessing engagement metrics such as likes, comments, views, and overall follower growth related to Instagram Stories, as well as exploring qualitative aspects of consumer interaction, including sentiment and feedback shared through these platforms. There are three research questions that this study will answer RQ1: How do Instagram Stories affect consumer engagement with high-end vs. drugstore beauty brands? RQ2: How do high-end and drugstore beauty brands' Instagram Stories strategies differ? RQ3: What is consumer perception about interacting with these beauty brands on Instagram Stories?

Given the unprecedented growth of digital media consumption among Pakistani audiences and the burgeoning importance of visually-driven social media platforms in shaping consumer behaviours, this study posits that Instagram Stories play a pivotal role in crafting a brand's narrative, enhancing its visibility, and bolstering consumer engagement (Jenkins, 2022). This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by offering insights into how different segments of the beauty industry in Pakistan utilize Instagram stories for consumer engagement. This study looks into how local luxury and affordable beauty brands use Instagram Stories, aiming to shed light on digital marketing strategies in the beauty sector and how well they work across various market levels.

## **Literature Review**

The influence of social media on consumer engagement within the beauty industry has been extensively documented in the literature (Lima, Irigaray and Lourenco, 2019; Gani et al., 2023; Chakraborty et al., 2024; Marchowska-Raza, 2024). The advent of Instagram, and specifically its Stories feature, has revolutionized brand-consumer interactions, offering an ephemeral yet impactful medium for engagement (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The visual-centric nature of Instagram Stories aligns seamlessly with the beauty industry's reliance on aesthetics, making it a potent tool for marketing and consumer engagement (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019).

## **Overview of Digital Marketing in the Beauty Industry**

Digital marketing in the beauty industry has been moving from the conventional one found only in print journals to the current one, which is more interactive on multi-platform media sites. Digital-first strategy is a trend in the beauty industry as it is very eye-catching and focuses on customer experience (Pendse and Pandey, 2023). Brands achieve this by using a multi-

channel strategy that is a combination of websites, social media, influencer collaborations, and e-commerce avenues to connect with consumers (Vaishnav and Ray, 2023). The channel of social media, as a cherry on the cake, is structural for beauty brands whose products can be present on such platforms through images and interactive content while interacting with the consumers in various ways to set a community connected with the brand and its values (Setiawan and Salim, 2024). Nowadays, social media platforms, including Instagram, have given beauty brands an opportunity to introduce new products that are enabled with virtual try-ons, tutorials done by influencers, and user-generated content that may contribute to a highly personalized shopping experience (Colombi, Kim and Wyatt, 2018). With the development of a more native e-commerce integration directly for social media platforms, such as Instagram checkout, there has been a further merging of advertisement and immediate sales, providing consumers with uninterrupted shopping channels. The effective use of digital marketing strategies, particularly within social media, is crucial for the success of beauty brands. Strategic content creation and consumer interaction on social media platforms like Instagram can elevate brand awareness and foster a loyal customer base (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). The role of Instagram in enhancing consumer engagement is well-established, with research indicating that the platform holds significant sway over purchase decisions due to its visual nature (Dhanesh, Duthler and Li, 2022). Instagram's capacity for high-quality imagery and video content translates into a competitive advantage for beauty brands aiming to showcase their products compellingly (Fakhreddin and Foroudi, 2022). The Pakistani beauty industry provides a captivating context for examining social media engagement strategies due to its rich cultural heritage and rapidly growing digital landscape (Aksar et al., 2024). Beauty brands in Pakistan are not only competing on product quality but also on their ability to engage digitally-savvy consumers (Khan et al., 2022). Emerging research indicates a growing trend among Pakistani beauty brands to leverage Instagram Stories for storytelling, brand announcements, and consumer interaction, emphasizing the platform's role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours.

### **Consumer Engagement on Social Media**

The scholarly exploration of business engagement with consumers on social media shows that this is a prompted dialogue with multiple layers determined by the quality of content, quantity, personalization, and inclusion of engaging and interactive elements. Numerous researches related to the beauty industry had shown a significantly higher engagement on a post that attracted the reader's attention with details about a new product featuring a tutorial or before and after images, which used the visual feature of Instagram (Gerrath and Biraglia, 2021). The research also gives the importance to influencer collaborations in increasing engagement rates due to the fact that influencers have this layer of consumer trust and honesty when they work with brands. This body of knowledge repeatedly emphasizes that the respectful creation of content and constant participation of the target audience are the key characteristics of turning them into devoted readers (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Consumer engagement on social media platforms includes a range of activities; it's not just about scrolling through content, but also actively getting involved and even creating new content to share (Santos et al., 2022). Engagement goes beyond how often consumers interact with brands it's really about the strength and significance of the relationships that are built between them (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega and Jimenez-Martinez, 2016). This multifaceted construct is pivotal in evaluating the effectiveness of Instagram Stories as part of a brand's digital marketing strategy. Instagram Stories provide a special advantage through their fleeting nature, fostering frequent and personal exchanges between brands and their audience (De Vries, Gensler and Leeftang, 2017). This feature enhances the perceived authenticity and relatability of brands, facilitating a deeper emotional connection with the audience (Godey et al., 2016). Studies focusing on the beauty industry have shown that Instagram Stories can significantly impact consumer

engagement levels, driving metrics such as likes, comments, and direct messages, thereby fostering a strong sense of community (Jones and Lee, 2022; Paintsil and Kim, 2022).

### **Impact of Visual Content on Consumer Behaviour**

The influence of visual media on the purchasing process could be observed in the beauty trade in a particularly potent fashion, as the end view of the product is usually the main factor that helps sell it. Research has proven that visual attractiveness does not just call the attention of the viewer but also enhances memorability for products and can change consumer's emotions and perception of the brands (Mai and Schoeller, 2009). Videos or pictures that show the product's effectiveness or final product results, such as demonstrations or images of transformation, are likely to gain more attention and conversion than usual (Hinz et al., 2021). Such impact on the consumer's psychological state is connected to the possibility that he/she might see themselves using the specific product with the significant amount of fear involve. Also, colour psychology, imagery style, as well as composition of content all have been researched, while there are specific aesthetics that work more subtle for some target groups. In summary, demonstrations or images of transformation, are likely to gain more attention in modern society, hence the critical role visuals play in influencing customer perception and behaviour in the beauty industry on the digital front (Carah and Shaul, 2016; Zhou, 2017). It is part of this literature review that provides a robust base for appreciating the dynamics of how Instagram Stories are used for marketing in the cosmetic industry. This way, the Study offers a good opt with the further investigation of the role of "customers' behaviour", primarily through Stories, which are an instrumental way of visual story-telling. Ephemeral content, such as Instagram stories, has been identified as a catalyst for spontaneous consumer interaction (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Lopez et al., 2021). the transient nature of stories creates a FOMO (fear of missing out) effect, encouraging consumers to engage more frequently and fostering a form of digital intimacy between the brand and its audience (Maar, Kefi and Orhan, 2023). Brand positioning that distinguishes between high-end and drugstore categories significantly influences consumer perceptions (Vuong, 2022). The role of luxury vs. affordability in shaping consumer preferences, emphasizing that high-end brands are often associated with status and exclusivity, while drugstore brands hinge on practicality and value for money (Amatulli and Guido, 2011). The potential of Instagram stories to build and convey a brand's narrative is articulated in the literature as a way to enhance consumer engagement through storytelling (Gensler et al., 2013). The role of narratives in driving emotional responses and a sense of brand authenticity, elements that are particularly effective in the visual-centric beauty industry. To summarise, the current body of research lays the groundwork for understanding how Instagram usage influences consumer engagement, ephemeral content's role within the app, branding's effect on consumer perceptions, and the ways in which culture and economy shape these dynamics. However, this literature review points to a notable gap: a need for a comparative study on how Pakistani high-end versus drugstore beauty brands use Instagram Stories to connect with customers. Addressing this gap could yield significant implications for refining digital marketing approaches, tailored to the nuances of varied market tiers within the beauty industry.

### **Underlying Assumptions of the Study**

The present study is grounded in the premise that digital marketing within the beauty sector is increasingly shaped by visual social media platforms, with Instagram emerging as a dominant driver of consumer influence and brand discovery (Fakhreddin & Foroudi, 2022; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Instagram Stories, in particular, differ from traditional static posts by offering temporal, interactive, and immersive content that is assumed to stimulate higher consumer engagement (Belanche et al., 2019; Kim, 2021). It is further presumed that beauty brands consciously design their Stories to align with their brand positioning, whereby high-end brands

highlight luxury and exclusivity, while drugstore brands emphasize affordability and accessibility (Hernández Villana, 2023). Based on existing literature, consumer responses to branding content are expected to vary across market segments, with engagement behaviour influenced by the perceived value of the brand category (Lapresta-Romero et al., 2024). Moreover, engagement outcomes are assumed to be shaped by specific story-level attributes, including narrative quality, posting frequency, and incorporation of interactive features such as polls, questions, and swipe-ups (Setiawan & Salim, 2024; Keerakiatwong et al., 2023). Because engagement on Instagram encompasses both behavioural metrics (views, likes, comments, follower growth) and emotional or attitudinal responses captured through consumer feedback and sentiment, numeric analytics alone are insufficient to fully capture interaction intensity (Jenkins, 2022). Finally, this study assumes that Pakistani beauty consumers are highly active on Instagram and view it as a primary source of product awareness and brand communication, given the rapid expansion of digital media consumption and the beauty sector within the country (Khan et al., 2023; Aksar et al., 2024).

### **Methodology**

This study embraced a mixed-methods approach, blending qualitative and quantitative research to thoroughly investigate the set research questions. It began with a descriptive analysis of both high-end and drugstore brands to tackle the first research question (Leech et al., 2010; Creswell, 2014). Initially, a descriptive analysis was conducted on both high end and drugstore brands to answer the RQ1. Then a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), scrutinized Instagram Stories from high-end and drugstore Pakistani beauty brands to address RQ2 and shed light on RQ3 . The quantitative phase sought to uncover patterns and relationships among variables (Punch, 2013), whereas the qualitative phase aimed to capture the nuances of consumer expressions and visual stories, thereby enriching and providing depth to the statistical data (Greenfield and Greener, 2016). By merging these methods, the research achieved a balanced perspective, enhancing the overall reliability and depth of the findings (Connaway and Radford, 2021). By measuring engagement metrics and story interactions quantitatively alongside performing qualitative content and sentiment analysis, the research gains a multifaceted understanding of consumer engagement and perception regarding Instagram Stories of beauty brands. This dual-method approach not only validates the findings across different dimensions numeric trends and thematic insights but also deepens the analysis by explaining the 'why' behind the 'what,' thereby enhancing the study's overall reliability and depth in answering the research questions. Purposive sampling was employed to select a diverse mix of beauty brands for this study, with an emphasis on those utilizing Instagram as their primary marketing channel (Campbell et al., 2020). Selection was based on each brand's engagement rate and willingness to participate (Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks, 2019). Two high end beauty brands namely Kashees and BBA, and two drugstore brands Miss Rose, Glamorus Face were selected and evaluated. Over a one-month period, quantitative data was systematically gathered to capture the engagement metrics and story metrics on Instagram. Daily likes, comments, and story counts were tracked, and follower counts were recorded at the start and end of the month to measure growth<sup>(Yoon et al., 2018)</sup>. For Instagram Stories, the number of posts, views per story, and interaction rates, including replies and poll responses, were documented. All this quantitative data was extracted through software that leveraged Instagram's Graph API for high precision and efficiency. During the data analysis phase, descriptive statistics were applied to summarize the engagement and content metrics(Drivas et al., 2022), and correlation analysis was conducted to probe the relationship between the use of Instagram Stories and the levels of user engagement. Statistical techniques such as descriptive analytics were used to summarize the data, providing insights into average engagement rates, follower growth, and content reach. Qualitative evaluation relied on Content Analysis and consumer comments to rationalize how the Instagram Stories influenced the psychological and emotional behaviour of the consumers

(Stsiampkouskaya et al., 2021).The qualitative dimension of the data collection process involved a deep content analysis, categorizing Instagram Stories and regular posts into different content types, such as promotions, tutorials, behind-the-scenes glimpses, among others (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis of comments and replies provided deep insights into consumer behaviours and preferences through a qualitative engagement study. This examination helped to unravel the intricate themes and sentiments prevalent among the audience. By employing NVivo for data coding and synthesis, researchers were able to pinpoint key themes linked to engagement and how they relate to the effectiveness of the brand's content strategy and storytelling on the platform (Krippendorff, 2018). This methodology approach allowed for a detailed exploration of the narrative and context behind quantitative metrics, yielding a better understanding of user engagement behaviour and the impact of content on the audience. Through this thematic analysis, the study sheds light on the prevailing opinions, sentiments, and perspectives within the community, while offering a reliable view of the audience's connection with the content.

**Result**

The comparative analysis was conducted over a month to reveal the distinct patterns of engagement, content strategy efficiency, and follower growth between both high-end (Kashees, BBA) and drugstore (Miss Rose, Glamorous Face) Pakistani beauty brands on Instagram:

**Phase 1: Engagement Metrics**

High-End Brands, including Kashees and BBA, display impressive average engagement rate of 4.5%, because of their appealing illustrations and celebrity endorsements. This rate is particularly high for posts unveiling new products and offering tutorials. It highlights a strong sense of brand loyalty among their followers. On the other hand, Drugstore Brands like Miss Rose and Glamorous Face have experienced a slightly lower average engagement rate of 3.2%. Their success is largely attributed to posts highlighting affordable makeup options and customer reviews. It facilitated rapid growth in their follower base, indicating their appeal to a broader audience. While high-end brands are distinguished by their quality content leading to higher engagement, drugstore brands focus on making beauty accessible and affordable, navigating the challenge of engaging an ever-expanding audience with professional insight.

Table 1: Engagement Metrics Comparison				
Metric	Kashees (High-End)	Beauty by Amna (High-End)	Miss Rose (Drugstore)	Glamorous Face (Drugstore)
Average Engagement Rate	4.7%	4.3%	3.1%	3.4%
Likes Per Story (Avg.)	4000	1350	800	550
Comments Per Story (Avg.)	250	120	100	85
Follower Growth Rate	.55%	.75%	1.2%	.90%
Story Posting Frequency per Week	31	25	19	18
Avg. Story Views	12000	5000	4500	3500

**Content Strategy Quantitative Analysis**

This section displays each brand's focus on different content types like influencer collaborations, product showcases, user-generated content, and tutorial videos over a period on

one months. Each brand shapes its Instagram content to align with its identity, with high-end brands showcasing luxury through influencer partnerships and exclusive products, while drugstore brands emphasize value with practical tutorials and user-generated content. High-end brands highlight prestige, whereas drugstore brands underscore affordability, both engaging followers and growing their bases via different content approaches.

Table 2: Content Type Frequency

Content Type	Kashees (High-End)	BBA (High-End)	Miss Rose (Drugstore)	Glamorous Face (Drugstore)
Influencer Collaborations	36	18	5	4
Product Showcases	25	30	11	9
Customer Testimonials	14	7	23	20
How-To Video Tutorials	13	9	19	18
Interactive Posts (Polls, Q&As)	15	20	3	2
Promotions	1	2	11	8
Swipe Up Links	18	12	8	14

## Phase 2: Brand Strategy and Audience Response

High-end brands concentrate on themes of luxury, exclusivity, and premium quality. Along with maintaining a very regular posting schedule to keep their audience engaged. Their approach to expand their fan base involves forming partnerships with influencers and creating exclusive content that captures users' interest. Additionally, they tend to interact more personally with their followers, particularly in the comments section on order to enhance their engagement experience. In contrast, drugstore brands concentrate on the promotion of affordability, accessibility, and value, and they might not post as regularly as high-end brands. Their focus is to grow their audience through promotional offers, discounts, and by encouraging user-generated content, which greatly enriches their content variety. This differing approach underscores how both types of brands customise their strategies to align with their unique brand values and audience anticipations.

Table 3: Strategy and Audience Response

Content Strategy Factors	High-End	Drugstore
<b>Themes Identified</b>	Luxury, Exclusivity, Quality	Affordability, Accessibility, Value
Consistency in Posting	Very consistent	Less consistent
Audience Growth Tactics	Influencer partnerships, exclusive content, Engaging campaigns	Promotions, discounts Engaging content, UGC
Content Diversity	Moderate, focus on product showcases and tutorials	Low, majorly UGC and product showcases
User Engagement Approach	Personalized responses, high interaction in comments	Generic responses, high engagement rates

## Consumer Perception of Interaction

Followers of luxury beauty brands often display a deeper emotional connection with the brands they support, crediting this connection to the brands' capability to deliver exclusivity and to

display convincing narratives around their products. On the other hand, supporters of drugstore beauty brands frequently highlight their trust in these brands and their appreciation for the practicality and cost-effectiveness which is promoted via Instagram Stories. Conversations among drugstore brand followers often revolve around the value and performance of products, with repeated instances of users tagging their peers in promotional posts that highlight bargains or introduce new affordable items. In order to understand the level of customer engagement with beauty brands through Instagram Stories, an analysis of consumer comments was conducted. This analysis accurately categorized and evaluated sentiments displayed by user interactions. It draws comparisons between the language and emotional responses towards both luxury and drugstore brands on social media platforms.

Table 4: Content Analysis — Word Frequency and Sentiment

Word/Phrase	Frequency in High-End Comments	Frequency in Drugstore Comments	Sentiment Analysis
"Expensive"	150	20	Negative in the context of cost
"Worth"	100	120	Generally positive
"Affordable"	10	200	Positive
"Effective"	80	150	Positive
"Luxury"	200	5	Positive

### Comparative Thematic Analysis

Through the application of qualitative engagement analysis via NVivo coding, the research describes clear patterns of interaction and engagement with the brands. The findings indicate that luxury brands mainly interested in establishing a premium brand image. Which is facilitated by high-quality content and exclusive collaborations, resulting in high engagement rates per post. Similarly, drugstore brands prioritize convenience and a wide-reaching audience engagement, focusing on increasing their follower count through the implementation of diverse and engaging content strategies. Each methodology is consistent with the respective brand's market positioning and the interests of their target demographic, showing the efficiency of personalised social media strategies. Sentiment analysis further refines these insights, revealing consumer feedback that spans from commendation for the high-quality, authentic experiences offered by luxury brands, to calls for more authentic and relatable content from drugstore brands. Additionally, there is notable consumer feedback concerning the perceived over-commercialization of partnerships and a shortfall in personal engagement across both brand categories.

Table 5: Sentiment Analysis by Theme

Theme	High-End Brands	Drugstore Brands
Influencer Collaborations	Positive: Good brand match Negative: Poor fit	Positive: Trustworthy Negative: Oversaturated
Social Media Engagement	Positive: Engaging sessions Negative: Lack of interaction	Positive: Recognizes customers' needs Negative: Impersonal
User-Generated Content	Positive: Premium image Negative: Authenticity concerns	Positive: Realistic Negative: Quality doubts
Product Demonstrations	Positive: Artistic tutorials Negative: Hard to replicate	Positive: User-friendly Negative: Incomplete



## Discussion

In examining the performance of Pakistani beauty brands on Instagram, this study distinctly categorizes and contrasts high-end brands against drugstore brands. This delineation mirrors the segmentation articulated by previous researchers (Marber et al., 2008; Jashari and Rustemi, 2017; Ong and Vila-Lopez, 2023) who emphasize the necessity of distinct marketing strategies across different consumer segments. By creating disaggregated tables for qualitative and quantitative insights, the study delves deeper into the dynamic Instagram ecosystem that is increasingly shaping consumer behaviours (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). High-end Pakistani beauty brands, demonstrate a notable proficiency in fostering strong engagement and maintaining a consistent brand aesthetic (Franzak, Makarem and Jae, 2014). The quantitative analysis, specifically the higher average likes and comments per post, underpins their ability to engage a loyal customer base that values prestige and exclusivity (Hollebeek, 2011). The drugstore brands, show an upward trajectory in follower growth, emphasizing the effectiveness of their strategy to entice a broader audience profile. Cost-effective brands engage customers through promotional incentives and relatable content (Modi et al., 2024). The reliance on user-generated content and diverse types of posts suggests an attempt to democratize beauty by involving the community, which could explain their rapid follower growth rates in the quantitative analysis. Through the qualitative lens, we see that high-end brands prioritize visual quality and strategic influencer collaborations. This intertwines with their articulated brand images, and the role of influencer marketing in creating aspirational value among high-end consumers (Leban et al., 2021). Drugstore brands' moderate ratings for visual aesthetics and influence alignment reveal a more pragmatic approach, which arguably situates these brands within a more accessible and approachable market category. The content strategy analysis provided further granularity, illuminating how different brand tiers prioritize content diversity and audience engagement tactics. High-end brands opt for a meticulously curated presentation and personalized interactions, similar to strategies observed in other luxury markets (de Oliveira, 2021). Drugstore brands favour more direct and varied engagement practices, using discounts and contests to stimulate activity techniques are as effective for broader market appeal. Collectively, these results suggest that the distinction in Instagram performance metrics between high-end and drugstore beauty brands mirrors broader consumer behaviour trends. Brands need to ensure that they are creating content that is relatable to the particular target audience, rather than just appealing to a broader market audience in order to foster deeper relationships. Using customer-generated content and personal experiences generates the aura of an authentic tells a brand to use Instagram Stories to engage more effectively with the target audience.

## Limitations and Future Research

This study's exploration into high-end and drugstore beauty brands on Instagram sheds light on user engagement dynamics but is bounded by several limitations such as a restricted focus on select brands, reliance on Instagram which may not capture a brand's entire digital strategy, a preference for quantitative metrics that overlook deeper engagement aspects like loyalty, temporal limitations, and a focus on the Pakistani market that may not translate to other cultural contexts. To extend the insights gained, future research could benefit from broadening the scope to include multiple social media platforms for a more comprehensive digital marketing analysis, conducting longitudinal studies to observe engagement over time, comparing strategies across different international markets to ascertain cross-cultural insights, delving into consumer perceptions through qualitative research, and examining the role of visual content in enhancing engagement. Addressing these areas promises to enhance our understanding of digital marketing within the global beauty industry, proposing valuable implications for both academic and practical marketing worlds.

## Conclusion

This study provides deep understanding into the strategic use of Instagram by both high-end and drugstore brands; each segment moulds their style to engage their distinctive audience. The main focus of high-end brands is to observe and curate quality content, which is enhanced by strategic partnerships with influencers. Their purpose is to build a premium brand image. This strategy skilfully promotes a sense of exclusivity and cultivates deep engagement with a niche market that values and seeks out luxury experiences on social platforms (Godey et al., 2016).

Drugstore brands are getting everyone involved and making beauty accessible for all by using creative and welcoming marketing strategies. They're reaching out to a bigger, more diverse group of people by encouraging customers to share their own content and using a variety of different posts. This approach doesn't just sell products; it builds a real sense of community. By setting up fun contests, giveaways, and interactive activities, these brands make everyone feel like they're part of the beauty conversation (Vuong, 2022). Drugstore brands are really good at keeping up with what people care about today, adjusting their content to match everyone's changing interests. This shows just how powerful it is to include everyone in their digital marketing. When you look at how differently high-end and drugstore brands use Instagram, it's clear that tailor-made digital marketing is key to standing out online and making a brand memorable in a busy market (Kim and Phua, 2020).

This study really shows how important Instagram is for beauty brands in Pakistan. By using the specific features of Instagram and understanding what their audience likes, brands can create and refine ways to connect with people. This helps them build a loyal customer base and keep the conversation going in a crowded and competitive digital world.

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