The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision through Customer Experience:
An Empirical Study on Skin and Hair Care Products in Egypt

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Abstract
The purpose of this research is to empirically investigate the relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and purchase decision with mediation role of customer experience in the Egyptian skin and hair care products. The objectives of this research are: to investigate the relationship between SMM and purchase decision, to examine the relationship between SMM and customer experience, to test the relationship between customer experience and purchase decision, to examine the moderation role of social platforms in the relationship between SMM and purchase decision and finally to investigate the mediation role of customer experience between SMM and purchase decision. Data in this study came from a survey of 390 acceptable responses. The results were analysed employing by Structural Equation Modeling technique (SEM) using Analysis Moment of Structures (AMOS) software. The main conclusions drawn from this study are: the direct effect between SMM and purchase decision is statistically significant, the direct effect between SMM and customer experience is statistically significant, the direct effect between customer experience and purchase decision is statistically significant. Finally, the results of the mediation effect indicate that there is a partial mediation effect of the customer experience in the relationship between SMM and purchase decision.

Keywords: SMM, Customer Experience, Purchase Decision, Skin and Hair Care Products.

Introduction
In recent years, multiple online media channels have emerged to communicate a company’s offerings and encourage consumers’ buying decisions. Aswani et al. (2018) reported that these channels emerged as a result of the advancement of information and communication technologies. Later studies that focused on marketing activities via social media established that developing social connections using online platforms is regarded as an emerging method of advertising and reaching mass audiences (Wang et al., 2019; McClure & Seock, 2020). Several social media sites have emerged recently due to the advancement of communication technologies, which has prompted marketing practitioners to take advantage of them for interacting, communicating, and collaborating with their social customers (Grover et al., 2019). Such rapid advancements in internet and information technologies provided business practitioners with enormous opportunities for reaching their audiences and reinforcing their brand values (Reveilhac and Blanchard, 2022; Saheb et al., 2021). The adoption of social media for communicating and promoting new products or services has witnessed tremendous development owing to its significance in influencing consumer buying behavior, (Park et al., 2021). According to Kar and Kushwaha (2021), when consumers are interested in obtaining important data about a brand, they tend to search social media. A way of communication and interaction between individuals is through social media platforms. It facilitates the way companies are able to interact with customers and offer services such as online purchases, online payment, and product search. In addition, it includes various web-based tools that enable internet users to virtually share

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and broadcast large pools of information (Gómez et al., 2019). Companies have started to put effort into enhancing customer experience through social media platforms and internet websites in general as a result of the increase in the use of social media platforms worldwide (Rose et al., 2011). Customer experience is a goal-oriented process that influences customer loyalty and focuses on developing positive behavioral intentions. It has a significant role in the way customers deal with, assess, and trust the company. Many researchers highlighted the relevance of customer experience in the service evaluation process (Verssimo and Menezes, 2016). Customer experience contributes to the customer’s assessment of the offered product or service value. This might have a significant impact on the customer’s purchase decision. Customers have a tendency to compare their experience with several companies. Customers may evaluate their experiences throughout time and across channels due to the interactions between companies and customers (Maklan & Klaus, 2013). With the massive spread of social media platforms, social media has changed or affected customer experience management; social media offers opportunities for a positive experience that can lead to a long-term relationship that involves product information search, purchase transaction, and/or service delivery (Rose et al., 2011). This may be due to companies dealing with online customers still lacking considerable experience. Looking at prior empirical studies on SMM, it can be observed that the majority of them examined their effects on purchase intention rather than actual purchase (Sun & Wang, 2020). Prior studies on SMM explored their direct effects on buyer behavior, but those that explored the processes through which SMM may affect purchase decisions are scarce (Hasan & Sohail, 2021; Mason et al., 2021). Accordingly, the present paper tends to investigate the relationship between SMM and purchase decision with mediation role of customer experience in the skin and hair care products in Egypt.

**Literature Review**

Social media marketing is considered the independent variable including (perceived relevance, interactivity, entertainment, informativeness), customer experience is considered the mediator variable including (Peace of mind, moments-of-truth, outcome focus, Product experience), social platforms is considered the moderating variable and purchase decision is considered the dependent variable.

**Social Media Marketing**

Researchers employed different elements of SMM to test their influence on customer buying behaviour in recent literature (Wang et al., 2019). The current paper, on the other hand, focuses on four key features of SMM in order to establish their influence on purchase decisions via customer experience namely: (perceived relevance, interaction, entertainment, and informativeness). Observing previous studies, one can see that there are limited empirical research on these variables in the Arab region. Companies may now show and provide their products and services in various ways via images, videos, and other media. Moreover, social media provides clients with a huge platform on which they may review their preferred products and easily communicate with the company (Kim et al., 2021). Individual adoption of any modern information technology system needs trust as well (Liu et al., 2022). When users develop a high level of trust in brands that promote themselves on social media channels, they will have a high level of confidence in purchasing their offerings. Nowadays, brands may easily engage with customers and contact them using various social media networks to promote their offerings and develop positive images for themselves in the customers’ minds (Thaker et al., 2020). The information on social tends to spread swiftly among customers and minimize the risk of purchasing desired products or services (Liao et al., 2019).

**Customer Experience**

Customer experience is defined as a multidimensional structure concentrating on the behavioral, cognitive, affective, sensory, and social reactions of customers to marketing stimuli (Schalllehn et al., 2019). Customers’ experiences are memorable events involving customers. A pleasant and positive sensory experience influences the purchase intention of customers (Garg, 2014). Customer experience, according to Brakus et al., (2009), is the subjective and behavioral response of a customer to brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design. Customer experience is integrated with customer satisfaction, customer equity,
service quality, and relationship management in the marketing field. As previously said, the customer experience process begins with pre-purchase, then purchase, and eventually post-purchase all through the customer journey. In each stage of this experience, the customer interacts with different touchpoints depending on the nature of the product or service, such as brand-owned, partner-owned, and customer-owned ones. Affective experience is a significant factor in the decision-making process of customers of products and services (Nardini & Lutz, 2017). Creating various customer experiences is a type of marketing activity that involves the senses involved and focuses on customer experiences. Environment influences sensory stimuli-affected experiences (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017). The purpose of creating customer experiences is to provide good services that meet our customers’ expectations (Gorgoglione & Panniello, 2018).

Purchase Decision

In previous studies, a purchase decision was defined as a person’s decision to choose a certain product or service supplied by a company above those of its rivals (Kim & Sung, 2009). Internal and external marketing factors may influence a consumer’s purchase decision. Internal factors include attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, personality, perception, lifestyle, roles, and status. External factors, on the other hand, include social class, membership organizations, and culture. As consumers are now exposed to a variety of product or service offerings and multiple alternatives, service providers have realized that it is very challenging to attract and retain successful relationships with key customers to ensure their continued growth and presence in the marketplace (Salem, 2018). Marketing practitioners have also noticed that consumers have become more comfortable connecting with other consumers via Internet channels and social media sites, and consequently, most service providers have created their own pages on social networks in order to connect with customers online and create positive images about their brands (Hutter et al., 2013). When consumers become more aware of a brand and its offerings, they often seek additional information about it online and then evaluate the benefits of selecting it over rivals before making a purchasing decision (Sharma et al., 2021). As a result of this, social media sites have currently developed as a significant method for connecting and interacting with customers digitally at lower costs. Companies can improve customer involvement (Gkikas et al., 2022), easily share vital marketing messages, and swiftly reach the target market by using social media networks (Huang et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2018). Customers will also have an opportunity to influence others and share their thoughts through online reviews, comments, and word-of-mouth (Liu et al., 2021).

SMM, Customer Experience and Purchase Decision

Nowadays, social media has become an essential part of people’s lives. Businesses are rapidly investing more resources in optimizing the online consumer experience due to its considerable effect on retail. The ability to convert a website visitor into a customer is the core idea here. Some design components, such as visual stimuli contribute to this process (Bleier et al., 2018). The customer’s subjective, multifaceted psychological reaction to a product or service’s online presence is represented by the online customer experience. Due to the websites’ inclusion of images, videos, and comparative information for the specific product or service, this experience is also social and sensory. Offering each product or service in a way that improves customer experience and online shopping is the key technique (Nagy & Hajdu, 2021). According to Bleier et al. (2018), the type of a product and brand trustworthiness influence each experience dimension, which impacts customer purchase. As a result, marketers should employ design elements strategically to create distinct types of experiences for various goods and brands. Furthermore, videos have the strongest effect on the sensory experience of customers. Sellers should provide elements that are instructive and entertaining to the customer, as well as how online design elements may be utilized to drive purchase behaviours by customising experiences to the product being sold (Wibowo et al., 2020; Bate and Balawi, 2022). The way the company shares content on social media is crucial, as it influences how customers interact with the company and its offerings. Consequently, this interaction between customers may lead to either a positive or negative experience. In the context of customer experience, social media is used to collect data for customer experience management; data can be gathered, analysed, and distributed to monitor the progress
of each process. An organisation can gain a competitive advantage to maintain its business by providing a determined online customer experience that attracts, delights, and retains customers with a memorable experience by generating customer value, differentiating the company from competitors, and addressing client requirements toward their loyalty (Rahman et al., 2022). Therefore, the company cannot ignore the importance of every online customer experience, including transactions, pre- and post-purchase service, after-sales service, purchase decisions, and whether customers are satisfied with the service, which will support their referral marketing. This is considering that every result of customer expectations, intent, or perception will affect the relation between the company and the customer (Deyalage & Kulathunga, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review discussed above, the research conceptual framework was formulated as below:

![Conceptual Framework Diagram]

The operational definitions for the conceptual framework are illustrated in Table (1).

### Operational Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variable:</strong></td>
<td>Hanaysha (2022) adapted from Alalwan (2018) and Cheung et al. (2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mediator Variable:</strong></td>
<td>Kumar et al., (2022); Klaus and Maklan (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variable:</strong></td>
<td>Hanaysha (2018)</td>
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Research Methodology

According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research is an investigation method that may be used to describe trends and explain the relationship between variables found in the literature. A questionnaire is utilised to collect data for this research through survey monkey. The questionnaire data is analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyse quantitative data, including descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), and Structural Equation Model analyses (SEM) using Analysis Moment of Structures (AMOS) software to analyze the hypothesized model.

Results and Findings

The research questionnaire was administered to seven hundred (700) female respondents. 428 questionnaires representing 61.1% were returned, and 38 questionnaires representing 4.8% were incomplete or...
ineligible or refusals and 272 (38.9%) were not reached. There were 390 acceptable responses, a response rate 55.7%, which is highly adequate for the nature of this study. Social media platforms: The frequency of “Social media platforms” indicates that the majority (184) of respondents using Facebook platform, which is 47.2%, the next highest is 23.1% of respondents (90) using Instagram platform, the third highest is 17.7% of respondents (69) using YouTube platform and the lowest of respondents are using “Pinterest” platform 12.1%.

Measurement items have standardized loading estimates of 0.5 or higher (ranging from 0.504 to 0.922) at the alpha level of 0.05, indicating the convergent validity of the measurement model. Discriminant validity shows the degree to which a construct is actually different from other constructs (Hair et al., 2019). The Average Variances Extracted (AVE) should always above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). AVE of the particular constructs (Interactivity = 0.624, Entertainment =0.561, Informativeness =0.739, Perceived Relevance =0.583, Peace of Mind =0.690, Moments of Truth =0.564, Outcome Focus = 0.575, Product Experience = 0.596 and Purchase Decision =0.750) are more than 0.500. Overall, these measurement results are satisfactory and suggest that it is appropriate to proceed with the evaluation of the structural model. Composite Reliability (CR) is used to measure the reliability of a construct in the measurement model. CR is a more presenting method of overall reliability, and it demonstrates the consistency of the construct itself (Hair et al., 2019). The CR of Interactivity = 0.869, Entertainment =0.827, Informativeness = 0.918, Perceived Relevance =0.846, Peace of Mind =0.930, Moments of Truth =0.837, Outcome Focus = 0.844, Product Experience = 0.852 and Purchase Decision =0.938. So, it clearly identified that in measurement model all construct have good reliability.

Measurement model Results: The 9 factor was subjected to CFA using the AMOS software. DF was 1129 (it should be more than 0), \( \chi^2/DF \) has a value of 2.369, that is less than 2.0 (it should be less than or equal 2.0). The RMSEA was .054 (it should be less than 0.08). The TLI index was 0.922 which is very close to 1.0 (a value of 1.0 indicates perfect fit). The CFI was 0.930. All indices are close to a value of 1.0 in CFA.

Structural model summary: The results of structural model using the AMOS software, shows that DF was 691 (it should be more than 0), \( \chi^2/DF \) has a value of 2.428, that is less than 2.0 (it should be less than or equal 2.0). The RMSEA was .055 (it should be less than 0.08). The TLI index was .919 which is very close to 1.0 (a value of 1.0 indicates perfect fit). The CFI was 0.924. All indices are close to a value of 1.0 in CFA.

Structural model
Discussion

This research study aimed at investigate the relationship between SMM and purchase decision with mediation role of customer experience in the Egyptian skin and hair care products. Prior literature reveals that the majority of earlier studies on SMM explored their direct effects on buyer behavior, but those which explored the mechanisms through which SMM may affect purchase decision are scarce (Hasan and Sohail, 2021; and Mason et al., 2021). This research study addressed the gap in literature regarding purchase decision in addition to that the scarce in such kind of research in skin and hair care products especially in the Egyptian context.

The Direct Effect

Due to the individual tests of significance of the relationship between the variables. It reveals that, a positive relation between SMM and customer experience ($\beta = 0.513$, CR (Critical Ratio) = 4.931, CR > 1.96, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, (H1: SMM has an impact on purchase decision in the Egyptian skin and hair care products) is supported. This result is consistent with the study of Muntinga et al., (2011) who asserted that, the interactions via SMM platforms enable customers to obtain customer service when purchasing certain items or services. Furthermore, the continuous improvement of social media sites is likely to encourage customers’ online interactions with others by discussing a brand’s benefits, stories, and attributes. These interactions can reinforce the bonds between customers and their service providers, leading to favorable exchange outcomes. Arjun et al. (2021) claim that marketers may exploit mobile apps, e-mail, and internet technologies to interact with customers more easily. Interactivity, according to Zafar et al. (2021), has a noteworthy influence on shaping customers’ impulse purchase behaviours. (De Vries et al., 2012; Yeon et al., 2019; Liao et al., 2019) examined social media interactivity and observed that it had significant effects on purchase decisions. Furthermore, entertainment via social media platforms exists when service providers create memorable experiences for their customers by developing funny and playful content that fulfils their entertainment needs (Van Noort & Van Reijmersdal, 2019; Cheung et al., 2020; Mustafi & Hosain, 2020; Sohail et al., 2020; Pertier, 2021). Perceived customer relevance exists in virtual settings through designing messages to the target group of customers. Zhu and Chang (2016) provided evidence for the idea that customers’ purchase intentions are influenced by perceived relevance through self-awareness. Purchase decisions and brand trust are likely to be stimulated towards the service provider when marketers concentrate on instance responses to consumers’ queries via social media platforms (Gautam & Sharma, 2017). According to Lee and Hong (2016), informativeness exists when marketing practitioners create persuasive ads that may help in attracting an increased number of customers and influencing their stated customer behaviours towards marketing content. Service providers can easily reach and inform their customers about the most recent news and product offerings on social media sites, making it a viable option for them to search for specific goods or services (Chhonker et al., 2018; Chen and Lin, 2019; Bilgin and Kethüda, 2022).

Moreover, pertaining to H2: SMM has an impact on customer experience in the Egyptian skin and hair care products is supported as the result shows that ($\beta = 0.775$, CR (Critical Ratio) = 13.258, CR > 1.96, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.05$), as it predicts that “There is a positive relation between SMM and Purchase Decision “. This finding is consistent with Rose et al., (2012) who reported that, Online customer experience is a psychological condition that occurs as a personal reaction to an online retailer’s website. Determinant online customer experience is essential for attracting, delighting, and retaining customers with a memorable experience by creating customer value, differentiation, and customer satisfaction towards customer loyalty that can give a company a competitive advantage to sustain their business (Mbama & Ezepue, 2018; Rahman et al., 2022).

The result shows that H3: customer experience has an impact on purchase decision in the Egyptian skin and hair care products. ($\beta = 0.394$, CR (Critical Ratio) = 3.206, CR > 1.96, $p = 0.001$, $p<0.05$). is support-
ed, as it predicts that “There is a positive relation between customer experience and Purchase Decision”. This result is consistent with Singh and Söderlund, (2020). Furthermore, due to Kulbyte (2018), It is crucial to measure customer satisfaction because 72% of customers will only tell six or fewer people about their positive experience, whereas 13% of customers who are dissatisfied will tell fifteen or more people about their dissatisfaction. Consequently, figuring out the factors of online customer experience is essential to avoid negative customer perception of the company by emphasising a customer-centric strategy in order to enhance the online customer shopping experience and effortlessly maintain customer loyalty for the success of the company. (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018).

**The Indirect Effect (Mediation and Moderation)**

In addition, findings reveal a statistically significant indirect impact of SMM and purchase decision through customer experience (P = 0.001, P<0.05). The results of the mediation effect indicate that there is partial mediation effect of the customer experience between the relationship of SMM and purchase decision. Therefore, (H4: customer experience mediates the relationship between SMM and purchase decision in the Egyptian skin and hair care products) is supported.

**The Moderating effects of social media platforms (A Multi Group Analysis)**

The results explain the interaction effect of social media platforms on the linkage between SMM, customer experience and purchase decision as the following:

1. The positive relationship between SMM and Purchase Decision is stronger for Instagram platform, (Beta (β) Value for Instagram platform =0.500, Beta (β) Value for YouTube platform =0.471, Beta (β) Value for Pinterest platform =0.449 and Beta (β) Value for Facebook platform =0.413)
2. The positive relationship between SMM and Customer Experience is stronger for YouTube platform, (Beta (β) Value for YouTube platform =0.919, Beta (β) Value for Facebook platform =0.856, Beta (β) Value for Instagram platform =0.799 and Beta (β) Value for Pinterest platforms=0.616)
3. The positive relationship between Customer Experience and Purchase Decision is stronger for Pinterest platform, (Beta (β) Value for Pinterest platform =0.508, Beta (β) Value for Instagram platform =0.449, Beta (β) Value for YouTube platform =0.359 and Beta (β) Value for Facebook platform =0.347).

Therefore, (H5: Social media platforms moderates the relationship between SMM and purchase decision in the Egyptian skin and hair care products) is supported. E-commerce has gained popularity and changed peoples’ buying behaviors as a result of the recent Covid-19 epidemic (Revinova, 2021). Traditional retailers have been put at risk by this evolution, forcing them to change their business practices (Jain et al., 2021). If the platform provider intends to evolve into the preferred platform, multiple obstacles must be overcome (Lekh, 2016). This is for the reason the success of an online shopping platform is determined by how satisfied customers are with their online experience (Sharma and Aggarwal, 2019) while using the platform. Nevertheless, Deyalage and Kulathunga (2019) revealed three characteristics that impact customer satisfaction with online shopping platforms. website design, website security, and customer service.

This paper has dual significance both academically and practically. Academically, the current research fills the gap and supplements the literature. The research developed a model contributes knowledge to other models that have recommended expanding the investigative scope using structural equation modelling technique. Therefore, an integrated framework estimated structural model corroborated the hypotheses, as SMM construct explained 60% of customer experience variance (R² = 0.600). Besides, SMM through customer experience explained 73.2% of purchase decision variance (R² = 0.732). Practically, the findings of this research have several implications for the development of the Egyptian skin and hair care products. First, it highlights the importance of online customer experience in the relationship between SMM and pur-
chase decision. Thus, the company cannot ignore the significance of every single touchpoint regarding the online customer experience, such as transactions, service received during the customer journey in order to create positive experience which leads customers to purchase. Second, the findings of this research provide guidance for policymakers and practitioners in skin and hair care industry in developing countries who seek to develop their online business. The online platform providers should be aware of the factors that make customers choose them over their rivals. Understanding what matters most to the shoppers when choosing an online shopping platform would be an added advantage. These factors will shape their experience and lead to continuous platform usage.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The research in this paper has investigated the relationship between SMM and purchase decision with mediation role of customer experience in the skin and hair care products in Egypt. The future research needs to be extended to be conducted to other developing countries.

Because this study’s sample was limited to one sector the skin and hair care industry, considering the fact that the research context is extremely specialized, it is thought that the conclusions spread over various fields such as SMEs.

One of the limitations of the current research was that the relationship’s dynamics were realised. This was accomplished when the research study was a cross-sectional study and data was collected throughout a specific time frame. Therefore, if the data were collected longitudinally, one would gain more insight into the dynamics of the relationship and maybe different deliverables. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers collect and analyse data during different years.

The researcher in this study used quantitative approach in data collection. Hence, future study should therefore consider adopting a qualitative approach to provide richer data and findings on this topic.
References:


Questionnaire

Demographics

1- Age (Less than 30 years - From 31– 40 years - From 41 – 50 years - More than 50 years)

2- Educational level (High school or below - Bachelor - Master / PhD)

3- Experience with your skin and hair care products
   - (5 years or less - From 5 – 10 years - From 10 – 15 years - 15 years or more)

4- which one of the following social media platforms do you mostly use?
   - (Facebook - YouTube - Instagram - Pinterest)

Social Media Marketing

Interactivity
- Social media marketing is effective in gathering customers’ feedback.
- Social media marketing encourages customers to offer feedback.
- Social media marketing makes me feel like it wants to listen to the voice of its customers.
- Social media marketing facilitates two-way communication between the customers and the firms.

Informativeness
- Social media marketing is a good source of product information and supplies relevant product information.
- Social media marketing provides timely information.
- Social media marketing is a good source of up-to-date product information.
- Social media marketing is a convenient source of product information.

Entertainment
- The content found in my skin and hair care products’ social media seems interesting
- It is exciting to use my skin and hair care products’ social media
- It is fun to collect information on products through my skin and hair care products’ social media
- It is easy to kill time using my skin and hair care products’ social media

Perceived Relevance
- Social media marketing means a lot to me.
- I think social media marketing fits to my interests.
- I think social media marketing fits with my preferences.
- Overall, I think social media marketing fits me.

Customer Experience

Peace of mind
- I am confident in their expertise of (my skin and hair care products), they know what they are doing.
- The whole process was so easy, they took care of everything.
- It is not just about the now, this skin and hair care products will look after me for a long time.
- I am already a customer, they know me and take good care of me, so why should I go somewhere else.
- I have dealt with them before so to get any product/service is really easy.
- I have dealt with them before so to get any product/service is really easy.

Moments of truth
- It was important that the skin and hair care products was flexible in dealing with me and looking out for my needs
- It is important that they keep me up to date and inform me about new options
- It is important that the people I am dealing with are good people, they listen, are polite and make me feel comfortable
- The way they dealt with me when things went wrong will decide if I stay with them

Outcome focus
- Yes, there are other skin and hair care products, but I would rather stay with mine it makes the process much easier.
- It was more important to get the products/services than to shop around for a better rate.
- I stay with my skin and hair care products because I am no confident about using an alternative company.
- It was important that my account manager had the same products/services too (similar to me), he/she knew
- what I was going through.

Product experience
- I want to choose between different options to make certain I get the best offer.
- It is important to me to receive offers from different skin and hair care products.
- Unless I can compare different options, I will not know which one is the best for me.
- It would be great if I could deal with one designated contact through the entire process of getting my products/services.

Purchase Decision
- I feel good about my decision to purchase products from this skin and hair care products.
- I will positively recommend this skin and hair care products to other people.
- I frequently purchase from this skin and hair care products.
- I intend to purchase again from my skin and hair care products in the future.
- Overall, I am satisfied about my purchase of goods from my skin and hair care products.