(REVIEW ARTICLE)

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# Strategic sales and marketing approaches in the dermatology product segment

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## Abstract

The dermatology market has experienced significant growth in recent years, fueled by increased awareness of skin health, rising disposable income, and the expanding demand for both cosmetic and therapeutic skincare products. As the distinction between pharmaceuticals and personal care continues to fade, the marketing and sales strategies for derma products have become increasingly competitive and multifaceted. This review explores the evolving dynamics of the dermatology segment, highlighting unique consumer behaviors influenced by both physician prescriptions and over-the-counter trends. It examines traditional methods like doctor-focused promotion through medical representatives, alongside modern approaches such as digital marketing, influencer collaborations, and personalized skincare solutions. Key factors like packaging, targeted advertising, and social media engagement are analyzed for their impact on consumer decisions. Additionally, the paper discusses regulatory challenges and future opportunities, including AI-driven skincare innovations. Overall, it provides a comprehensive view of how strategic marketing drives success in today's highly saturated derma industry.

**Keywords:** Dermatology Market; Skincare Marketing; Consumer Behavior; Digital Marketing; Influencer Promotion; Personalized Skincare; AI In Dermatology

## 1. Introduction

In today's world, where personal appearance and self-care are increasingly prioritized, dermatological products have become an essential part of daily life. From treating acne and pigmentation to preventing aging and sun damage, derma products now cater to both medical and cosmetic needs. As a result, the dermatology segment has expanded beyond the traditional boundaries of pharmaceuticals, giving rise to a thriving and competitive market. The rise in skin-related concerns, fueled by environmental changes, stress, and lifestyle factors, has significantly boosted demand for skincare solutions. Moreover, with increasing awareness among consumers and easy access to information online, people are more proactive in seeking effective skincare options. This shift in consumer behavior has created new opportunities—and challenges—for companies involved in the manufacturing, sales, and promotion of derma products[1]. Unlike other pharmaceutical categories, derma product marketing is heavily influenced by both medical expertise and aesthetic appeal. While dermatologists and healthcare professionals still play a key role in recommending products, modern consumers also rely on social media, online reviews, and influencer endorsements before making a purchase. This duality has pushed brands to rethink their sales and marketing strategies, balancing scientific credibility with appealing communication. The purpose of this review is to explore how sales and marketing techniques have evolved in the dermatology sector. It examines the role of healthcare professionals, the rise of digital marketing, consumer behavior, regulatory influences, and emerging trends. By understanding these elements, we can gain a clearer picture of what it takes to succeed in the fast-paced world of derma product marketing[2].

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## 2. Overview of the dermatology market

The dermatology market has seen tremendous evolution over the last decade, both globally and in India. What was once a niche category limited to prescription-based treatments has now expanded into a vast industry that includes cosmeceuticals, OTC (over-the-counter) skincare, anti-aging products, and even personalized skin solutions. This shift is not only a reflection of changing consumer preferences but also of how the healthcare and beauty industries are converging[3].

### 2.1. Global Perspective

Globally, the dermatology market is projected to reach over USD 35 billion by 2030, with consistent annual growth driven by lifestyle-related skin issues, increased aesthetic consciousness, and advancements in dermatological science. Developed markets like the USA and Europe have been long-time leaders, but emerging economies in Asia-Pacific are catching up quickly due to urbanization, improved access to healthcare, and growing middle-class populations.

### 2.2. Indian Dermatology Market

India, with its diverse climate and population, presents a unique and growing opportunity for derma products. The Indian dermatology market is currently valued at around INR 18,000–20,000 crore, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12–15%. Factors such as rising pollution, dietary changes, stress-related skin issues, and increased spending on personal grooming have contributed to this growth. The demand is particularly strong in urban areas, but awareness is steadily rising in rural markets as well.

### 2.3. Key Segments

The market is broadly segmented into:

- Therapeutic Products – for acne, psoriasis, eczema, fungal infections, pigmentation,
- Cosmeceuticals – products that lie between cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, like anti-aging creams, sunscreen, serums, and moisturizers.
- Hair and Scalp Care – treatments for dandruff, hair fall, and scalp infections.
- Procedural Dermatology Support Products – used alongside aesthetic procedures like chemical peels, microneedling, and laser treatments.

### 2.4. Growth Drivers

- Increasing disposable incomes and lifestyle awareness
- Rising incidence of skin disorders and infections
- Expansion of e-commerce and beauty platforms
- Greater emphasis on personal appearance due to social media influence

## 3. Consumer behaviour in dermatology

Consumer behavior in the dermatology segment is unlike any other pharmaceutical or personal care category. This is because derma products serve a dual purpose: they treat medical skin conditions and also cater to cosmetic desires such as glowing, youthful skin. As a result, consumer choices in this segment are shaped by a unique mix of health needs, beauty trends, emotional triggers, and professional advice[4].

### 3.1. Doctor-Driven vs. Self-Driven Choices

Traditionally, dermatology products were primarily prescribed by skin specialists or general physicians. Even today, for serious skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, or severe acne, consumers rely heavily on dermatologists' recommendations. However, with growing awareness and easier access to information via the internet and social media, many people now make independent decisions about what skincare products to buy—especially when it comes to non-prescription items like face washes, sunscreens, and moisturizers.

### 3.2. The Influence of Online Platforms

Today's consumer does extensive research before making a purchase. They read online reviews, compare ingredients, follow skincare influencers, and watch video testimonials. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and beauty blogs have

become powerful tools in shaping buying decisions. A single recommendation by a trusted influencer or dermatologist can significantly boost the sales of a product overnight.

### 3.3. Rise of the Informed Consumer

Modern derma consumers are highly informed and ingredient-conscious. Terms like "paraben-free," "non-comedogenic," "dermatologist-tested," and "fragrance-free" are no longer industry jargon—they're often decisive factors in the buying process. Consumers now look beyond branding and pay close attention to active ingredients such as salicylic acid, niacinamide, hyaluronic acid, and retinol.

### 3.4. Emotional and Psychological Factors

Skin issues often have a strong emotional impact, especially among young adults and teens. Conditions like acne or pigmentation can affect self-confidence, leading consumers to try multiple products in the hope of quick results. This emotional urgency often makes them more vulnerable to marketing promises, trial-based purchases, or influencer recommendations.

### 3.5. Gender and Age Preferences

- Women, particularly in the 18–35 age group, are the most active buyers of derma products, focusing heavily on cosmetic skincare.
- Men are becoming an increasingly important segment, especially in urban areas, where male grooming has seen a sharp rise.
- Older adults tend to invest more in anti-aging products and dermatologist-backed treatments.

### 3.6. Shift Toward Preventive Skincare

A growing trend is the move from reactive to preventive skincare. Consumers are no longer waiting for skin issues to appear; instead, they are investing in early care—like sunscreen, antioxidant serums, and pollution-protection creams—to maintain long-term skin health.

## 4. Sales strategies in derma products

Selling dermatology products involves more than just placing items on shelves or convincing doctors to write prescriptions. It requires a deep understanding of both the healthcare system and consumer preferences. Since derma products lie at the intersection of medicine and lifestyle, companies must adopt a multi-layered sales approach that caters to different customer segments — from prescribing dermatologists to beauty-conscious consumers[5].

### 4.1. Prescription-Based Sales Model

The most traditional and trusted route for derma product sales is through doctor prescriptions, especially for therapeutic products like anti-fungal creams, acne treatments, and steroid-based ointments. Here, Medical Representatives (MRs) play a key role. Their job is to visit dermatologists, general physicians, and hospitals regularly to:

- Educate doctors on the benefits, ingredients, and usage of the product
- Provide product samples for trial
- Share clinical data or marketing brochures
- Build long-term professional relationships with prescribers

A strong relationship between the MR and the doctor often translates into higher prescription frequency for a particular brand.

### 4.2. Over-the-Counter (OTC) Sales

While prescriptions dominate the therapeutic space, the OTC segment is booming, especially for products like face washes, sunscreens, moisturizers, and anti-aging creams. These products are sold in pharmacies, supermarkets, cosmetic stores, and increasingly via e-commerce platforms like Nykaa, Amazon, and Flipkart[6].

Sales strategies in OTC include:

- Attractive packaging and shelf placement
- Promotional discounts and combo offers
- Staff training at pharmacy counters to recommend specific products

### 4.3. Digital Sales Channels

With the surge in online shopping, companies are now heavily focusing on direct-to-consumer (D2C) models via their own websites or beauty platforms. Brands invest in user-friendly websites, skin quizzes for product suggestions, and targeted email campaigns to increase conversions.

### 4.4. Dermatology Conferences and CME Programs

Pharma and cosmeceutical companies often sponsor conferences, webinars, and continuing medical education (CME) programs to connect with doctors and promote their products in a more academic setting. This helps in:

- Building credibility
- Showcasing research-backed formulations
- Networking with leading dermatologists

### 4.5. Retail and Distributor Network

For physical product availability, an efficient supply chain and distribution network is critical. Sales managers coordinate with distributors and chemists to ensure the right product reach, maintain inventory levels, and monitor stock movement. Incentives are often given to distributors and retailers to push high-performing SKUs (stock-keeping units).

### 4.6. Sampling and Trial Packs

For new launches, companies often rely on product sampling to encourage first-time users. These trial-size packs are distributed through doctors, pharmacies, salons, or even online orders. If the consumer has a good experience, they're more likely to purchase the full-size version.

### 4.7. CRM and Feedback Mechanisms

Some brands use customer relationship management (CRM) systems to stay in touch with doctors and consumers, collect feedback, resolve complaints, and improve the post-sale experience. Loyalty programs, refill reminders, and personalized suggestions help in repeat purchases

## 5. Marketing strategies in derma products

Marketing in the dermatology sector is a unique blend of pharmaceutical ethics and consumer-brand engagement. Unlike general medicines, derma products not only need to be clinically effective but also visually appealing and emotionally convincing[7]. Companies must find a balance between scientific trust and aesthetic allure to effectively promote their products in this fast-growing and highly competitive industry[8].

### 5.1. Digital Marketing and Social Media

In recent years, digital marketing has become the most powerful tool for promoting derma products. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook allow brands to connect directly with consumers through:

- Educational content (e.g., skincare routines, ingredient benefits)
- Influencer collaborations
- Paid advertisements targeting specific skin concerns
- User-generated content and before-after testimonials

Many brands also use SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and Google Ads to drive traffic to their websites, where consumers can shop, read reviews, or even take skincare quizzes.

## 5.2. Influencer and Dermatologist Endorsements

- Influencers, beauty bloggers, and skin specialists play a critical role in shaping public opinion. Consumers tend to trust personal recommendations from real people, especially when they show visible results.
- Dermatologist endorsements add credibility to a product. Companies often feature certified dermatologists in ad campaigns or YouTube tutorials.
- Micro-influencers (people with smaller but engaged followers) are especially effective in promoting niche or sensitive skincare products.

## 5.3. Packaging and Visual Appeal

Since most skincare purchases are driven by visual impact, packaging design plays a major role in attracting customers. Brands invest heavily in clean, premium-looking packaging that communicates trust, safety, and sophistication. Important features include[9]:

- Clear mention of active ingredients
- Dermatologically tested labels
- Usage instructions and skin-type suitability

## 5.4. Targeted Campaigns and Product Positioning

Derma products are often marketed based on specific concerns like acne, pigmentation, aging, sensitivity, or dryness. Targeted ad campaigns make it easier for consumers to identify the product that matches their skin problem. Examples include:

- "say goodbye to breakouts" for acne treatments
- "glow naturally" for brightening serums
- "anti-aging science backed by dermatologists"

## 5.5. Promotions and Limited-Time Offers

To encourage first-time purchases or drive quick sales, brands run discounts, combo packs, referral codes, and flash sales. These promotions are especially effective during festive seasons, beauty sales, or product launches.

## 5.6. E-commerce and Product Reviews

Listing on beauty and pharmacy e-commerce platforms like Nykaa, Amazon, 1mg, and Flipkart helps brands tap into a massive online consumer base. High-quality product images, detailed descriptions, ingredient breakdowns, and customer reviews are critical in influencing purchase decisions online.

## 5.7. In-Clinic Marketing

Many pharma-backed derma brands market their products through in-clinic displays, banners, and sample giveaways in dermatologists' offices. These strategies are subtle but powerful, as patients are more likely to trust a product they see in a medical setting.

## 5.8. Events and Campaigns

Brands also engage in cause-based marketing or organize campaigns around skincare awareness. For example, campaigns on "Sun Protection Month" or "World Acne Day" help create brand visibility while educating consumers

## 6. Regulatory considerations in marketing derma products

While marketing is crucial for brand success, companies dealing with dermatology products must operate within a well-defined set of regulatory boundaries. Since many derma products lie at the intersection of pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, ensuring compliance with national and international guidelines is essential for consumer safety and legal protection[10][11], [12].

## 6.1. Classification of Products

One of the first regulatory challenges is determining whether a product is classified as a drug, cosmetic, or cosmeceutical[13].

Drugs are intended for treating, curing, or preventing medical conditions (e.g., anti-fungal creams, steroidal ointments) and are governed by strict pharmaceutical regulations.

Cosmetics are meant for external application for beautification or personal hygiene (e.g., moisturizers, face masks).

Cosmeceuticals are products that fall between drugs and cosmetics, offering therapeutic benefits but not always regulated as drugs. However, this category is still not officially recognized under Indian law, which creates grey areas for regulation.

### 6.2. Regulatory Authorities

In India, the following bodies regulate derma product marketing:

- CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organization): Oversees the approval and regulation of pharmaceutical products.
- DCGI (Drug Controller General of India): Grants licenses and monitors drug compliance.
- FDA (Food and Drug Administration – State and Central): Enforces regulations at the ground level.
- BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards): Regulates cosmetics safety and quality.
- Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI): Monitors misleading or unethical advertising content[14], [15].

### 6.3. Labelling and Packaging Rules

Derma products must follow clear labeling guidelines, including:

- Generic name and active ingredients
- Batch number and manufacturing/expiry dates
- Usage instructions and precautions
- Storage conditions
- Manufacturer's details and license number
- Whether the product is for prescription-only or OTC use
- Failure to comply with proper labeling can result in regulatory action, product recalls, or bans.

### 6.4. Claims and Advertisements

One of the most sensitive areas in derma product marketing is making product claims. Claims such as "100% cure," "instant fairness," or "clinically proven to reverse aging" must be backed by scientific data. If not properly supported, such statements are considered misleading and may attract legal penalties. The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 prohibits advertising for treatment of specific diseases without approval.

### 6.5. Restrictions on Influencer Marketing

As social media becomes a major marketing platform, regulatory bodies are working to ensure influencer marketing stays ethical. Influencers promoting prescription-based or therapeutic products must clearly disclose if they are paid, and they are not allowed to make unverified medical claims[16].

### 6.6. Import and Export Regulations

For brands importing raw materials or finished derma products, appropriate import licenses and quality certificates are mandatory. Similarly, exports must meet international regulatory requirements such as:

- US FDA
- EU Cosmetics Regulation
- ASEAN Cosmetic Directive

### 6.7. Ethical Marketing in Pharma-Derma

For prescription-based derma products, companies must adhere to the Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP), which regulates:

- Gifts and incentives to doctors
- Sponsorship of medical events

- Distribution of samples
- Transparency in promotional activities

## 7. Challenges in sales and marketing of dermatological products

Despite the promising growth of the dermatology market, companies face several significant challenges when it comes to selling and marketing derma products. These hurdles arise from the complex nature of skin health, regulatory constraints, market competition, and changing consumer expectations[17], [18].

### 7.1. Highly Competitive Market

The derma segment is flooded with numerous brands, both international giants and local startups, all vying for consumer attention. This intense competition often leads to price wars and marketing battles, making it difficult for newer or smaller brands to establish themselves. Differentiating products based on unique ingredients or scientific backing is crucial but not always easy[19].

### 7.2. Regulatory Complexity

Navigating the diverse and often ambiguous regulatory landscape is a major challenge. The blurred lines between drugs, cosmetics, and cosmeceuticals create confusion regarding product classification, labeling, and advertising. Companies must stay updated with frequently changing guidelines and ensure compliance, which can delay product launches or lead to penalties[20].

### 7.3. Building Consumer Trust

Consumers today are cautious and highly informed, often skeptical of marketing claims. Building trust is difficult, especially for newer brands without a long-standing reputation. Negative reviews or misinformation can quickly damage a product's image. Transparent communication and evidence-based claims are essential but not always straightforward to implement[21], [22].

### 7.4. Influencer Marketing Risks

While influencer endorsements can boost visibility, they also come with risks. Unethical marketing practices, exaggerated claims, or poorly informed influencers may lead to misinformation and backlash. Additionally, regulatory bodies are increasing scrutiny over such promotions, adding pressure on companies to monitor and control influencer content[23].

### 7.5. Pricing and Affordability

Many effective dermatology products, especially those with advanced ingredients or pharmaceutical backing, are priced higher than standard cosmetics. This can limit access for price-sensitive consumers, particularly in developing markets like India, where affordability plays a big role in purchase decisions.

### 7.6. Educating Consumers

Educating consumers about the correct use of derma products and managing expectations remains a challenge. Skin conditions vary widely, and results often take time, which can lead to impatience or misuse. Brands need to invest in educational content and support to ensure customer satisfaction and repeat purchases.

### 7.7. Supply Chain and Distribution Issues

Ensuring consistent product availability across urban and rural areas is complex. Supply chain disruptions, improper storage conditions, and counterfeit products pose risks to brand reputation and consumer safety.

## 8. Future trends in sales and marketing of dermatological products

As technology and consumer preferences continue to evolve, the dermatology market is poised for exciting transformations. Companies that adapt to these changes with innovative strategies will be better positioned to capture market share and build lasting customer relationships. Here are some key future trends shaping the sales and marketing landscape of derma products[24]:

### 8.1. Personalized Skincare

Advancements in AI, machine learning, and skin diagnostic technologies are enabling truly personalized skincare solutions. Brands are increasingly offering customized products and routines based on individual skin types, concerns, genetics, and even lifestyle factors. This trend is likely to drive higher consumer engagement and loyalty as customers seek products tailored uniquely to them.

### 8.2. Integration of Teledermatology

Teledermatology services are gaining popularity, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual consultations allow dermatologists to diagnose and recommend products remotely, which creates new opportunities for product sales through digital channels. Collaborations between teledermatology platforms and derma brands will likely increase[25].

### 8.3. Sustainable and Clean Beauty

Consumers are becoming more conscious of product ingredients and environmental impact. The demand for clean, natural, cruelty-free, and sustainable skincare products is expected to grow significantly. Brands that emphasize ethical sourcing, biodegradable packaging, and transparency about their environmental footprint will resonate better with eco-conscious buyers[26].

### 8.4. Use of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Try-Ons

AR technology is revolutionizing the way consumers interact with skincare brands online. Virtual try-ons, skin analysis apps, and interactive tutorials help consumers make informed decisions without physically testing products. This immersive experience is especially beneficial for online sales growth[27].

### 8.5. Influencer Marketing Evolution

While influencer marketing remains a strong tool, future strategies will likely shift towards micro-influencers and nano-influencers who have smaller, more engaged audiences. Authenticity and niche expertise will be valued over large follower counts, helping brands connect with targeted consumer segments more effectively.

### 8.6. Expansion of Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) Models

More derma brands will bypass traditional retail and doctor-distributor models by strengthening their D2C channels. This allows better control over customer data, personalized marketing, and higher profit margins. Subscription-based models for routine skincare are also expected to gain traction[28].

### 8.7. Enhanced Data Analytics and CRM

Leveraging big data and customer relationship management tools will become critical for tailoring marketing campaigns, predicting trends, and enhancing customer retention. Brands will invest more in AI-powered analytics to understand consumer behavior deeply and respond proactively

## 9. Conclusion

The dermatology market is an exciting and rapidly growing sector, driven by increasing consumer awareness, advances in science, and changing lifestyles. Successful sales and marketing of derma products require a balanced approach that respects regulatory frameworks, builds consumer trust, and leverages modern technology. While challenges like market competition and regulatory complexity exist, emerging trends such as personalized skincare, digital engagement, and sustainability offer promising opportunities for brands to innovate and connect meaningfully with consumers. As the boundary between healthcare and beauty continues to blur, companies that focus on evidence-based products, transparent communication, and customer-centric strategies will lead the way. The future of dermatology sales and marketing lies in blending medical expertise with consumer convenience and ethical practices, ultimately improving skin health and confidence for millions of people.

## Compliance with ethical standards

*Disclosure of conflict of interest*

There is no conflict of interest.

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