

BRITISH
BEAUTY
COUNCIL

British Beauty Council Together for Change

How the Beauty Industry Can Collectively
Tackle Online Skincare Misinformation



Executive summary

The British Beauty Council is committed to working with brands, influencers, experts and policymakers to continuously help improve the quality of skincare information consumers access, and to provide industry leading education. Via various initiatives, the organisation is dedicated to ensuring a sustained pipeline of talent to the sector, spotlighting the unique opportunities available in the industry, and enabling those within the workforce to develop their skills to raise the reputation of beauty.

As part of this work, the British Beauty Council has commissioned this report which examines the ever-changing beauty landscape and discusses the crucial role of accessible and digestible skincare education in fostering greater clarity, accuracy and informed decision-making among consumers.

Focusing on responsible beauty, it outlines actionable guidelines and solutions for brands, influencers, platforms and consumers in order to collectively build a more informed and trustworthy online environment, helping consumers find the right beauty information for their needs



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Introduction – the evolving beauty landscape

The beauty sector is experiencing unprecedented growth, with an increasing number of new skincare innovations and scientific advancements. As skincare science evolves, brands are introducing advanced formulations with active ingredients, customised skincare routines, and AI-powered skin analysis.

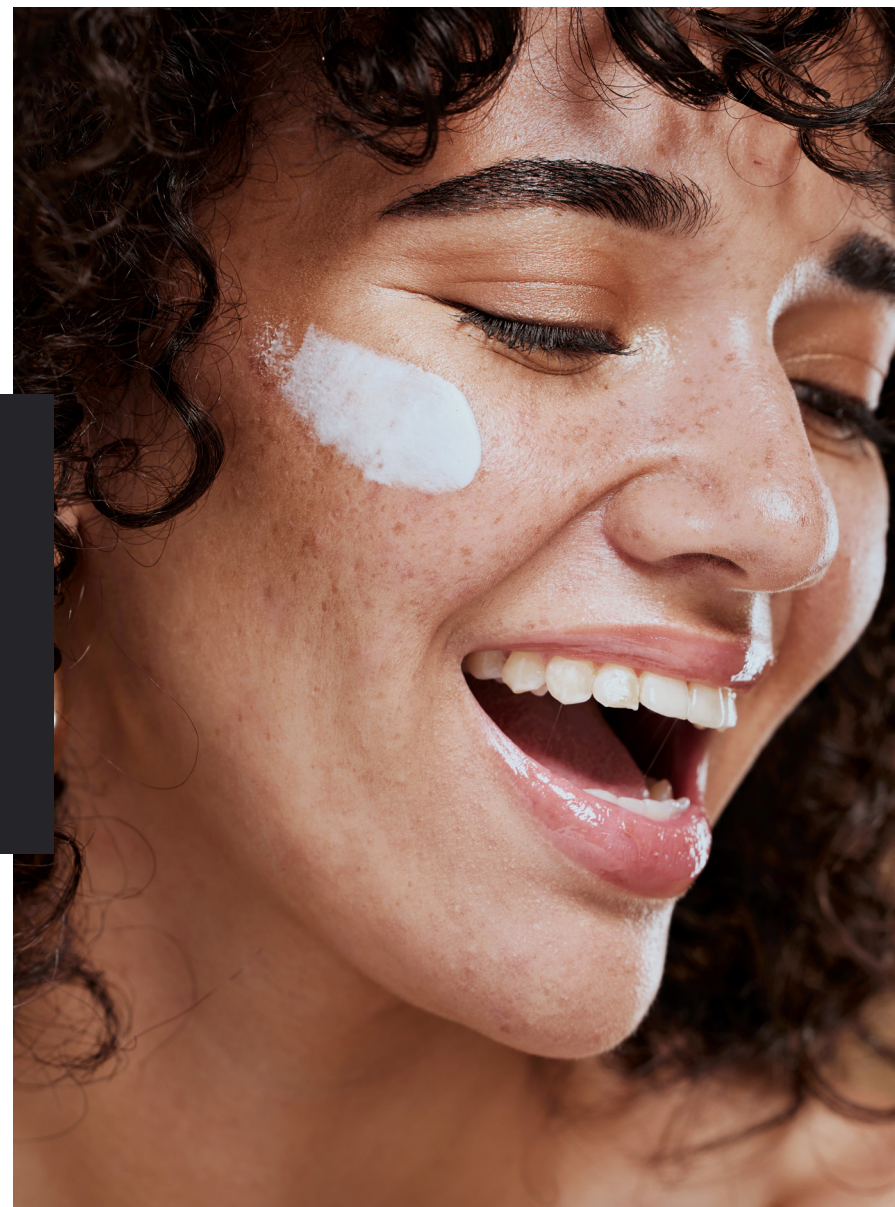
UK consumers now use an average of 7.5 products in their skincare regimes compared to 3.7 in 2020.

In parallel, social media has revolutionised the way individuals discover, evaluate, and engage with skincare products and information. It offers valuable opportunities for experts to share their knowledge, for brands to connect with their target audiences, for influencers to share relatable content, product reviews and personalised recommendations, and for consumers to discover new products and routines.

The sheer volume of beauty information now available online can be extremely helpful in surfacing, explaining, and demystifying skincare information. However, it can also result in confusion and complexity for consumers, and in some cases, contribute to the unintentional spread of inaccurate information.

Engagement with beauty content on social media platforms is soaring:

- Video views for skincare content were up 82% in the latest available figures in 2023 – the biggest annual growth in any beauty category².
- Specialised skincare content, such as that shared by dermatologists and other skincare professionals, is on the rise. Hashtags like #DermTok, saw views skyrocket from 60 million to over 337 million on TikTok in a single year³.
- Engagement with TikTok beauty content has increased by 58% in just one year⁴, with skincare content fuelling much of this growth.
- Skincare is a top interest for the TikTok community, with 69% of TikTok users expressing interest in the topic⁵.



¹ No7 Beauty Company Quantitative Consumer Usage & Attitudes Research with 6,006 (UK) / 6,034 (US) consumers, 2023; No7 Beauty Company Quantitative Consumer Usage & Attitudes Consumer Research, with 4,330 (UK) / 6,101 (US) consumers, 2020; © 2024 Walgreens Boots Alliance. All rights reserved. To note: In 2020, consumer usage habits were atypical due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

² Statista report [Link to article](#)

³ Ad Age article [Link to article](#)

⁴ Traackr 2023 Q3 State of Influence Report [Link to article](#) and [Link to article](#)

⁵ TikTok Marketing Science EUI Beauty Vertical Research 2022 conducted by InSites Consulting

What is skincare misinformation?

Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is spread, often unintentionally, by individuals who believe it to be true. This is distinct from "fake news" or disinformation, which involves the deliberate spread of false information.

In the beauty industry, misinformation often arises from misunderstandings about ingredient safety, product usage, claims, regulation, or scientific studies.

76% of women report having concerns about skincare misinformation being shared on social media⁶.

The good news is that, unlike disinformation, misinformation can often be addressed by empowering social media users with greater access to reliable education, scientific knowledge, and skincare expertise.

Social media can be a great resource; full of inspiration, information and recommendations, but it can be a double-edged sword with consumers not always finding it easy to navigate the volume of content and sometimes conflicting information. We're seeing it as an increasing responsibility to use our platforms to help people find the right information."

Lisa Bickerstaffe
Head of Communications,
British Skin Foundation

Types of beauty misinformation and their impact

Inaccurate scare stories:

Misinformation about ingredients – such as false claims that sun protection is harmful – can mislead consumers into not protecting their skin from the sun, leading to potential skin damage.

Tween skincare trends:

Some young audiences are starting to incorporate strong active ingredients, like retinol and acids, into their skincare without understanding their suitability for younger skin. 23% of tweens have purchased high strength skincare products based on influencer recommendations.⁷

Toxic ingredient myths:

Despite beauty products and ingredients being subject to stringent safety regulations, some social media trends overstate or misinterpret safety data, leading to unnecessary fear around common and rigorously tested ingredients

Misleading visuals:

Social media filters and AI enhancements offer valuable opportunities for product trial however they can make it harder for consumers to know whether beauty product results are real or exaggerated.

Fact vs. personal opinion:

Social media content is valued for its authenticity and relatability, enabling consumers to gather personal experiences and recommendations for a large range of products before they buy. However, the immense volume of beauty content online can create challenges for consumers to distinguish between subjective opinions and objective, scientifically backed information. This ambiguity can lead to confusion and, in some cases, to consumers purchasing products that are not suitable for their skin.

"Every day in clinic I hear people's frustration: 'I've spent thousands of pounds, but my skin has just continued to get worse'. Skincare can work brilliantly but it's not one-size-fits-all so it's important that our advice aligns with people's needs to help consumers decide if products are right for them."

Dr. Emma Wedgeworth
Consultant Dermatologist

- **80%** of dermatology providers say patients are increasingly bringing skincare and cosmetic trends from TikTok into clinics and **74%** of dermatologists have reported concerns about TikTok beauty trends influencing patient skincare choices⁸.
- Nearly a third (**29%**) of UK consumers say they have experienced skin irritation by using either inappropriate products or too many products⁹.
- **73%** of tweens would feel more confident in a social media beauty recommendation if they knew the content was delivered following skincare training¹⁰.

⁶ No7 Beauty Company survey via censuswide 2005 women who have at least seen beauty / skincare influencer content on social media

⁷ 1002 tweens (aged 11-15) in the UK who use skincare products, No7 Beauty Company Survey, via censuswide, August 2024

⁸ [Link to article](#)

⁹ No7 SkinCensus survey of 10,500 people through Boots consumer research panel, August 2023

¹⁰ 1002 tweens (aged 11-15) in the UK who use skincare products, No7 Beauty Company via censuswide, August 2024

Tackling skincare misinformation: Collective action for change

Skincare misinformation cannot be addressed by one group alone. Brands, influencers, regulators and social platforms all have a role to play in ensuring consumers receive accurate and transparent information on social media.

#1 How beauty brands can help to tackle skincare misinformation:

Making beauty education accessible:

Providing education and information is key. Brands are uniquely positioned to provide both consumers and influencers with knowledge and resources to help them access and create accurate and informative content.

1a. Supporting Influencers

As the creator economy continues to grow and evolve, beauty brands should continue to review and enhance the way they work with content providers. Brands should provide comprehensive briefings and education to ensure scientific messaging is shared with skincare influencers in a way that can be easily translated into their content.

- **Clear product information:**

Providing transparent jargon-free, evidence-based briefings on ingredients, benefits, claims and responsible usage helps influencers share clear accurate content.

- **Regulatory guidance:**

Ensure influencers understand advertising standards and UK cosmetic regulations.

- **Selection and vetting:**

A comprehensive influencer selection and support process helps to ensure creator partners have the right credentials to communicate information accurately on their channels.

- **Influencer code of conduct:**

Implementing an influencer code of conduct promotes transparency and ethical practices in influencer marketing.

Case Study: No7 Beauty Company

Industry-leading education commitment

No7 Beauty Company is committed to ensuring its influencer partners have the information, context and knowledge needed to talk about skincare with authority and confidence. The company has been working with the British Beauty Council since 2022 to deliver industry-first influencer education programmes, designed to support creators by providing science-based skincare training.

Developed in partnership with leading dermatological and social media experts, No7 Beauty Company and the British Beauty Council have launched a new skincare education programme – The No7 Beauty Company Skin School – which is available in a range of formats for both the public and paid influencer partners.

- **Exclusive No7 Skin-School Training:** Accredited by the British Skin Foundation and BABTAC, this training ensures influencers have the expertise to create responsible, fact-based content. All paid influencer partners in the UK must complete this training when working with No7 Beauty Company.
- **Open-Access No7 Skin-School:** Offering accessible, science-backed training modules for anyone interested in skincare, including both consumers and influencers. These modules are hosted on the [No7 Beauty Company website](#), making education easily available to all.

1b. Supporting consumers with accessible information

Consumers often struggle to find consistent, useful and reliable information. To address this, accessible resources must be promoted.

By making science backed skincare education more widely available, consumers can make more informed decisions about their beauty routines. Here are some steps they can take to verify information and learn more about skincare:

- **Use trusted educational resources:**

Resources and platforms such as the British Beauty Council's Creator Collective/Skin School programme in partnership with No7 Beauty Company and the British Beauty Council and Cult Beauty's 'Gen A – Z' tween and teen skincare resource provide useful content and expert advice for consumers. The CTPA's 'The

Facts About' website is also a rich resource providing transparency on ingredient safety and product regulations.

- **Access free in-person experts:**

Many beauty brands have trained professionals in stores who are on hand to provide people with free, expert and personalised skincare advice.

- **Check the source:**

Look for expert-backed information from dermatologists, skincare scientists, and trusted beauty brands.

- **Be cautious of extreme claims:**

Skincare trends that promote "miracle" results or dismiss widely accepted science (e.g., anti-SPF content) should be treated with scepticism.

2 How influencers can ensure they share accurate skincare information

- **Fact check sources:**
Prioritise expert-backed research and verified scientific studies over viral trends.
- **Clarify opinion vs. evidence:**
Make it clear when content is personal experience rather than science-backed advice.
- **Undergo training:**
Participate in educational programmes to enhance skincare expertise.
- **Ask for more information:**
Speak to experts or brand representatives to fact-check or further understand the necessary context around a piece of information.

"As beauty creators, we have a responsibility to share both anecdotal and scientifically backed information. Brands need to play a greater role in paid partnerships, ensuring creators can speak confidently about the science behind formulations. Personally, I've taken several courses and will soon qualify as an aesthetician to deepen my understanding and serve my community with integrity. Learning opportunities within brand partnerships will help educate creators and reduce misinformation."

Dani Nicholls
Beauty creator

#3 How social platforms can help

- **Improved content moderation:**
Using AI tools to flag and challenge misleading skincare claims.
- **Promoting expert backed education:**
Collaborating with dermatologists and scientists to highlight credible content.
- **Enhancing transparency:**
Introducing clearer labelling for sponsored content, AI and factual accuracy indicators.

"Sales through social media platforms are set to soar – with some estimates putting their share of total ecommerce sales at over 20% in just four years' time, highlighting the overwhelming need for more accountability and rigorous practices around misinformation to be put in place to protect consumers."

Rebecca Hobbs
Senior Retail Brand Comms
Trends Editor at Stylus



#4 How regulators can strengthen accountability

- **Upholding advertising standards:**
Regulatory bodies like the ASA, CMA and CAP continue to provide clearer guidelines on responsible content sharing and ad disclosures and undertake enforcement action where necessary.
- **Industry wide accountability:**
Maintaining clear guidelines for skincare claims across all digital platforms. Exploring measures and sanctions for flagrant mis/disinformation.

"With the rise of sophisticated filters and AI, reality can be easily distorted, making it hard to decipher what's real. It comes down to a duty of care—ensuring consumers aren't misled about a product or its effects. The Influencer Marketing Code of Conduct, jointly owned by ISBA and IMTB, calls for transparency in AI use, ensuring it enhances rather than deceives."

Scott Guthrie
Director General,
Influencer Marketing Trade Body



Conclusion: Building a smarter, more transparent beauty industry

Combating skincare misinformation requires a collaborative effort. By working together with transparency, education and integrity, the beauty industry has the opportunity to help consumers confidently navigate the overwhelming world of skincare on social media.

As Millie Kendall OBE, CEO of the British Beauty Council, states:

“The importance of factual information when speaking about skin care is critical these days as social media increasingly shapes buying decisions, determines how people curate routines and influences consumer sentiment. We must all push forward to ensure that the information out there is responsible, educational and trustworthy if we are to truly raise the reputation of our industry.”

By enhancing skincare education and ensuring responsible content creation, social media can remain a trusted, inspiring, and enjoyable platform for consumers to discover skincare solutions that truly work for them.

With special thanks
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