

# Selling Wellness at the Cost of Selling Worry: Nutricosmetic Industries Need an Honesty Makeover

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## ABSTRACT

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has filed over 120 enforcement actions against companies for making unsubstantiated, conjectural, or misleading health claims about supplements, highlighting a broader pattern of deceptive marketing practices in the wellness sector. The pernicious problem of buzzwords in wellness marketing, particularly in nutricosmetics, persists, affecting consumers subconsciously and contributing to adolescent insecurities.

The first aim of this study was to examine how wellness brands use marketing buzzwords and the extent to which these claims lack clarity or scientific substantiation. To explore this aim, qualitative methods, including literature review and content analysis of Instagram and company advertisements, were conducted to categorize buzzword types, assess claim clarity, and evaluate transparency. The results demonstrated a high prevalence of vague and uncorroborated claims, reinforcing concerns about misleading advertising practices.

The second aim of this study was to evaluate how exposure to buzzword-heavy versus evidence-based claims influences young adults' perceptions, loyalties, and anxieties. To investigate this, quantitative experimental surveys and correlation/regression analyses were conducted comparing participant responses to different labeling and marketing strategies. The results revealed that feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords strongly predicts perceiving ads as misleading, while ads emphasizing previously unnoticed consumer insecurities influenced purchasing decisions, and preference for evidence-backed claims does not significantly influence choosing statistical-claim products.

The third aim was to assess whether transparency influences consumer loyalty. Findings show that research conducted before purchase slightly predicts preference for ingredient-listed products, and stated willingness to repurchase from transparent brands weakly aligns with actual preference.

This paper explores how to hold brands accountable, remain ethical, and remain innovative. It argues that entirely transparent brands using scientifically backed evidence achieve higher customer retention and satisfaction and are more likely to thrive than those relying on buzzwords without substantiation. These findings suggest consistent transparency and evidence-based communication is the optimal method to enhance trust, credibility, and informed decision-making in wellness marketing.

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**Keywords:** *Nutricosmetics, supplements, brand loyalty/trust, consumer perception, marketing strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

Individual insecurities collectively contribute to seven trillion dollars (Global Wellness Institute). That is how much the wellness industry will make in 2025. While not all wellness products exploit insecurities, a significant portion of revenue is driven by marketing that capitalizes on perceived flaws in appearance, health, or well-being (Thornton, 2024). In the current health-obsessed, wellness-oriented world, individuals are becoming increasingly aware of their food and nutritional intake, body movement patterns, physical transformations, and overall appearances to the outside world. While people are continuously growing and adapting to these beauty standards, so are the big brands and industries that act on these trending societal norms. Many of these brands use deceptive marketing tactics with embellished advertising, often excluding crucial and pivotal information or relying on half-truths to sell products to consumers (Federal Trade Commission). Existing since the 1950s (Global Wellness Institute 2024), the wellness industry will continue to expand and evolve. Without a set of stringent regulatory standards ensuring corporate accountability for the psychological impact these marketing strategies have on consumers (especially adolescents), brands will persist in marketing products without adequately caring for consumers' mental health.

Wellness brands employ several promotional tactics to engage consumers. Content marketing, such as Instagram posts, influencer partnerships, and lifestyle blogs, can build trust and brand visibility while informing audiences about products. Direct advertising, including display ads, email campaigns, and sponsored social media content, can quickly drive sales, but sometimes exaggerates benefits. Insecurity-driven marketing (e.g., “battling cellulite” or “lose stubborn belly-fat”), can generate immediate sales, but may heighten self-doubt and consumer anxiety. Each approach has advantages and drawbacks: while content marketing can help build long-term loyalty and perceived transparency, it can be resource-intensive and slow to convert viewers into buyers. Direct and insecurity driven markets can help create instant revenue, but risks exploiting insecurities and misleading consumers for profit.

These brands will inevitably pursue sustained growth and advance, as they are a prominent market niche capitalizing on emerging beauty trends to secure a competitive advantage. The use of these buzzwords (broad and misleading) in marketing strategies contributes to customer perception, brand loyalty, insecurities, and psychological tolls on well-being. Buzzwords are commonly defined as “a word or phrase, often an item of jargon, that is fashionable at a particular time or in a particular context” (Oxford English Dictionary). While buzzwords can enhance memorability and amplify hype, not all are inherently harmful; however, certain buzzwords are strategically chosen to build on consumer insecurities. In this study, “buzzwords” are defined as vague, non-specific marketing terms (e.g., detox, clean, clinically formulated, and organic) that imply health or wellness benefits without providing clear, measurable, or scientifically verifiable evidence. These buzzwords can subtly trigger feelings of inadequacy or aspiration for transformation, and while not all buzzwords are inherently misleading, their overuse can obscure factual accuracy and influence consumer perception. These words are employed to convince the idea of a

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promising product, evoking a sense of desire for a physical or wellness transformation, even if the consumer exhibits limited understanding of potential outcomes (Naik, Patel, and Atre, 2023). This undermines brand transparency and accountability, potentially precipitating reputational decline and long-term adverse consequences (Boush, Friestad, and Wright, 2009). This also raises significant questions about how informed consumers are, and if they lack the proper knowledge to distinguish between scientifically supported information and promotional rhetoric. It is becoming onerous to navigate an industry where marketing often eclipses factual accuracy, and consumers cannot frequently critically assess marketing claims before engagement, due to limited proficiency in making evidence-based health decisions within a marketplace saturated by persuasive wellness messaging. This paper argues that while buzzword-heavy wellness marketing may generate short-term engagement, it ultimately weakens consumer trust and contributes to adolescent anxieties, whereas transparent, evidence-based communication is more effective in building long-term consumer loyalty and ethical brand growth.

This brings us to an essential question that addresses the growing ethical dilemma: How can we reimagine ethical marketing within the wellness industry and hold businesses accountable for using cross-sector marketing buzzwords that influence consumer perception and loyalty and fuel adolescent insecurity while preserving innovative growth?

This study examines how wellness industry marketing tactics shape consumer perceptions, loyalty, and adolescent insecurity. Using a mixed-methods approach of content analysis and experimental surveys, it evaluates both consumer responses and the ethical accountability of wellness branding. This research aims to develop evidence-based recommendations for transparent marketing practices that build consumer trust. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that transparency and evidence-based communication are more effective than buzzword-driven marketing in promoting trust, informed decision-making, and long-term consumer relationships.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research delves into the marketing tactics of the wellness industry, the interdependence and utilization of buzzwords, and the impact this particular sector has on consumers. Given that the focus is on exploring customer perception, qualitative content analysis, quantitative experimental survey, and data analysis approaches are implemented. These methods are most effective in examining consumer loyalty and the adolescent insecurity driven by these brands, and evaluating how the continuously expanding industry can be held accountable to reframed ethical marketing standards to support broader societal progress further. The target population is consumers ten years of age and older. The qualitative methods include literature reviews and a content analysis of Instagram/company website ads: it assesses the number/type of buzzwords used, clarity of claims, presence of disclaimers, and transparency (comparing brands that heavily impose buzzwords to those that explicitly reject buzzword-heavy marketing). Specifically, this analysis identifies commonly used buzzwords, examines the lucidity of claims and the presence or absence of supporting evidence, and distinguishes how brands use emotionally persuasive language, visual strategies, and transparency cues (such as ingredient disclosures and testimonials) to

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shape consumer perception. Alongside these methods, the research includes a quantitative experimental survey (done through Google Forms where participants fill out a consent form and remain anonymous) in which consumers answer Likert scale questions and choose between two versions of a label (using AI, Version A is buzzword-heavy and no concrete evidence, while version B is minimalist and factual). The survey measures key response variables, such as perceived credibility of advertisements, susceptibility to insecurity-driven marketing, and preference for transparency versus statistical claims, forming the basis for measuring consumers’ trust in a brand, perception of quality, and likelihood to purchase. A data analysis conducted in Excel further analyzed trends, patterns, and correlations using the data collected. This analysis aims to examine the relationship between variables, including whether exposure to buzzword-heavy marketing is associated with increased perceptions of misleading advertising, whether consumer research behavior relates to preference for transparent products with disclosed ingredients, and whether evidence-based claims are associated with purchasing decisions. The combination of qualitative content analysis and quantitative survey is intentional: content analysis first identifies patterns and strategies in marketing, which then inform the survey design to test how these strategies influence consumers’ perception and preferences. This combined approach allows for a more thorough understanding of the research problem, as qualitative analysis reveals what marketing patterns exist, and quantitative methods measure how these patterns affect consumers. This pathway, which traces how marketing patterns influence consumers and, in turn, guide decision-making, allows the study to propose actionable strategies for ethical marketing. Expected trends include that buzzword-heavy ads may increase perceived insecurity and lower trust, whereas transparent, evidence-based ads may enhance trust and purchase intentions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The wellness industry is caught in a never-ending buzzword loop, where these businesses act on new trends. Then, others join in by piggybacking off of one another, adding more buzzwords into the saturated media, ultimately leading to customer confusion. This process deliberately preys on adolescent insecurity, putting sales above the well-being of consumers. The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) defines the wellness industry as a multi-trillion dollar global market comprising sectors such as personal care & beauty, healthy eating, nutrition & weight loss, physical activity, etc. It is expected to continue its growth trajectory, potentially reaching nearly \$9 trillion by 2028 (Global Wellness Economy Monitor 2024). A 2023 analysis by Sánchez-Alonso and López-Meri shows that over 70% of teens follow at least three influencers who promote brands weekly, directly impacting their buying behavior and self-concept (Dianova, 2025).

**Table 1: Selected Literature Review**

<u>Study</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Factors</u>	<u>Findings</u>
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Sigler 2023	Mixed	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital health investment space (investors, startup leaders, healthcare strategists)</li> <li>- Ethical patterns and investment drivers</li> <li>- Responsible investing (ESG frameworks)</li> <li>- Health impact metrics</li> <li>- Key performance indicators (KPIs)</li> <li>- Investors in the wellness and digital health space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wellness companies use trendy buzzwords to get funding without proving real health or social benefits.</li> <li>- Overuse of buzzwords makes marketing less honest and transparent.</li> <li>- Investors often back unethical marketing because ESG rules do not adequately measure long-term health or social effects, especially for marginalized groups.</li> <li>- We need better metrics to hold companies and investors accountable.</li> <li>- Teens are especially at risk from persuasive wellness marketing and unregulated health apps.</li> </ul>
Fathurohman, Marzuki, and Baharta (2023).	Quantitative	Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media use</li> <li>- Self-perception</li> <li>- Social relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media use is linked to changes in how teens see themselves, often shaped by trends or influencers.</li> <li>- More time online is changing how teens interact, with less in-person engagement and more reliance on online validation.</li> </ul>
Bohannon 2023	Qualitative	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insecurity and low-self self-esteem</li> <li>- Social media content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Young girls are especially affected by unrealistic, edited ad images, which can harm self-esteem.</li> <li>- Brands often edit visuals to exploit insecurities and aspirations.</li> <li>- Policies could help reduce harm, like labeling altered images, rewarding brands that use unedited content, and teaching youth media literacy.</li> </ul>
Naik, Patel, Atre 2023	mixed	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cognitive responses</li> <li>- Affective responses</li> <li>- Behavioral reactions to animated advertising.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kids around age 12 like ads but often do not realize they are persuasive, relying on emotional reasoning.</li> <li>- Even skeptical teens may still want products if they are framed as aspirational.</li> <li>- Teens use products to fit in with peer groups and shape their identities.</li> <li>- Kids copy celebrities and connect products with status and acceptance.</li> <li>- Young people's low ad literacy shows the need for ethical rules and clear disclosures in wellness marketing.</li> </ul>

Boush, Friestad, Wright, 2009	mixed	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observational study of how deceptive persuasion operates</li> <li>- Consumers respond emotionally/misinterpret ads</li> <li>- Consumers' interpretation of marketing messages &amp; cognitive biases</li> <li>- Consumer reactions and behavior with misleading/non-deceptive advertisements</li> <li>- Consumer skepticism</li> <li>- Awareness of deceptive practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Misleading marketing takes advantage of people's limited attention or understanding.</li> <li>- It can hurt long-term trust but boost short-term sales, creating a tension between ethics and profit.</li> </ul>
Laham 2020	mixed	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marketing materials used by beauty brands.</li> <li>- Consumer spending trends correlate with their insecurities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The beauty industry uses vague terms like "natural" or "clean" without a precise meaning to promote unrealistic beauty standards.</li> <li>- Brands sometimes use feminist-sounding language to appear socially conscious while mainly aiming to boost sales.</li> </ul>
Wu, Geylani 2020	mixed	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dynamics between advertisers who make false claims and consumers who respond with skepticism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- False ads work less well when consumers become more skeptical, and companies feel pressure to be more truthful.</li> <li>- Too much skepticism can also hurt honest advertisers.</li> <li>- Rules against false advertising can help, but they must be balanced, not discourage honest marketing or innovation.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for regulatory frameworks</li> <li>- Policy interventions</li> </ul>	
Sprague, Wells (2010).	Qualitative	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existing regulatory frameworks</li> <li>- Potential legal reforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some companies hide ads as if they are honest customer opinions (“stealth marketing”).</li> <li>- Stronger rules and enforcement can help people distinguish between genuine opinions and paid promotions.</li> </ul>
Grev 2016	Mixed	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marketing communications</li> <li>- Brand perception.</li> <li>- Consumer insights on reactions to buzzwords and authenticity cues.</li> <li>- Purchase intent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buzzwords can boost credibility if they match the brand’s actual values.</li> <li>- Authenticity builds customer loyalty, so buzzwords need real meaning.</li> <li>- Buzzwords tied to consumer values (like sustainability) work best when supported by evidence.</li> </ul>

Studies also show that buzzwords impact perceptions of brand authenticity: when aligned with values and supported by evidence, they enhance trust and loyalty, but overuse leads to skepticism and damaged reputations (Grev, 2016). Adolescents are especially vulnerable to wellness marketing’s social and psychological influences, with exposure linked to altered self-image and increased reliance on online validation (Fathurohman et al., 2023; Naik et al., 2023). Visual manipulation in advertising further harms young consumers’ self-esteem, emphasizing the need for regulatory safeguards and media literacy (Bohannon, 2023)

While prior studies have thoroughly documented the prevalence of buzzword-heavy marketing and its subliminal impact on consumers, particularly affecting adolescents and young women (Bohannon, 2023), there remains a paramount necessity to directly link the language used in wellness branding to measurable consumer perceptions of trust, authenticity, and purchase intent within this vulnerable demographic. Existing research has often ignored how different types and degrees of buzzword saturation influence consumers’ cognitive and emotional responses. Although considerable discourse has been on the need for accountability within wellness marketing (Sprague & Wells, 2010; W & Geylani, 2020), comprehensive and **practical** methods or policies remain underdeveloped. Existing frameworks often overlook the critical inclusion of consumer perspectives, particularly those of these vulnerable populations, in shaping accountability mechanisms. This gap overlooks the necessity of integrating consumer input to design

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more effective and impactful regulatory approaches that address the underlying issues of buzzword use and its effects.

This study challenges the widespread belief that effective marketing relies on vagueness, exaggeration, or misleading buzzwords. Instead, the argument is made that companies can build enduring consumer trust and promote sustainable development by prioritizing clear communication and evidence-supported claims. By addressing these issues, the paper adds to ongoing discussions surrounding consumer rights, adolescent mental health, and the future trajectory of responsible branding in a marketplace increasingly shaped by wellness culture.

## **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

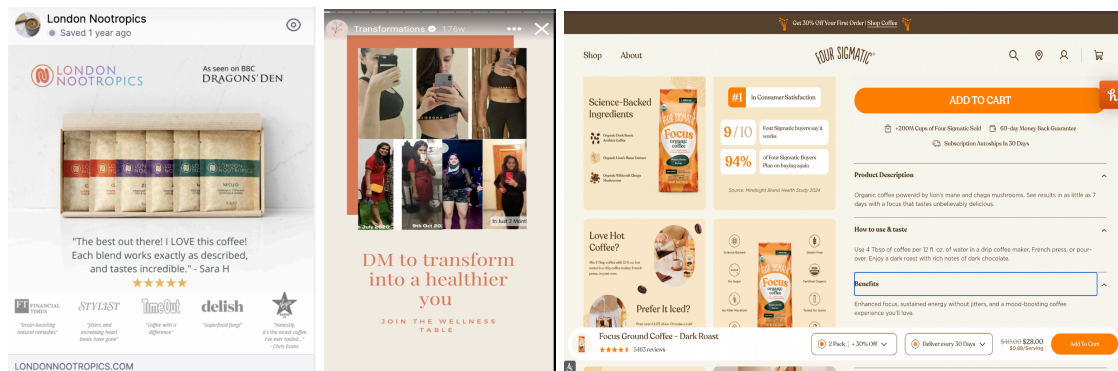
Building on these scholarly insights, the following content analysis examines how wellness brands strategically deploy five key strategies: buzzwords, visual design, consumer testimonials, ingredient transparency, and personalized messaging are all used to shape perceptions of authenticity, trust, and loyalty among adolescents and young consumers. By analyzing company social media posts and brand websites, the study identifies shared marketing patterns and illustrates how consumers interact with these strategies. These themes not only reveal broader industry trends but also provide a basis of information for the survey questionnaire to identify a refined apprehension of which methods are effective, and which negatively impact consumers.

Brands utilize minimalist advertising to avoid clutter and friction so that consumers can understand the message clearly and quickly. Over the past decade, the rise of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok has contributed to shorter attention spans, as users scroll rapidly through predominantly visual content (Iqbal, 2025). This shift in consumer behavior has pushed brands to adopt minimalist, image-oriented advertising that communicates key messages almost instantaneously. Given that many individuals have a short attention span (Golden Steps 2025), humans ultimately process images and simple statements faster than dense texts, so this approach allows the brain to understand the message in seconds and focus solely on what the brand is promising, which, in other words, are the buzzwords. The solid color background and minimal words (outside of what it is promising) (Fig. 1) make the product easier to remember. Only focusing on the benefits of these products, rather than going into depth about ingredients, frames the product around the customer's outcome rather than overwhelming them, tapping into a more emotional, needs-based decision process. In addition, the first two ads (Fig. 1) that include symbols next to the ingredients/perks of the product add a visually appealing aspect that also influences the consumer.



**Figure 1: Label-oriented and Minimalist Design**

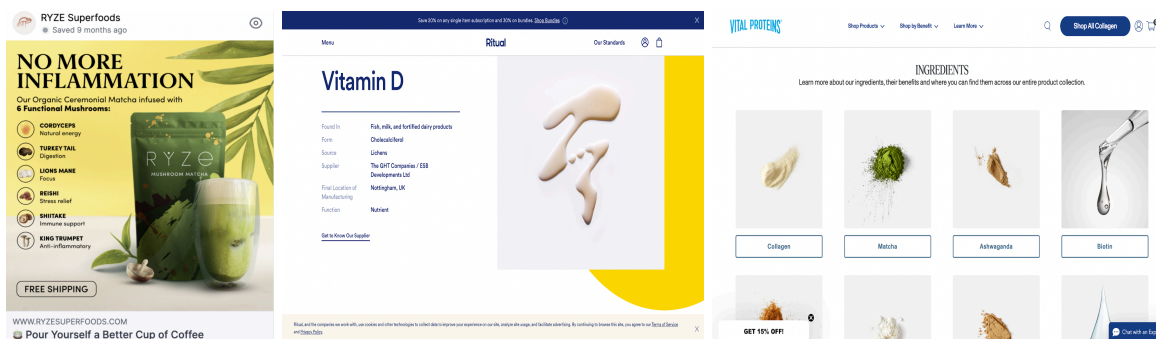
Another method besides highlighting buzzwords includes using other consumers to sell to a target market. This could consist of brand evangelists, where consumers speak highly of a company and endorse it to their peers, or emphasizing customer feedback on a particular product. This method effectively builds trust because, rather than the brand trying to convince people of a product's worth, fellow consumers recommend it, translating into a sense of peer validation. In Figure 2, the first brand uses a quote from a consumer to highlight the product's efficacy, which can reduce consumers' purchase anxiety and make it seem like the risk of wasting money is lower. In the second picture, client transformations create a sense of reliability and let potential customers envision themselves achieving the same results. The third picture provides statistics on customer satisfaction metrics, where these numbers act as objective-seeming proof points and appeal to the brain's logical part (Fabrik 2025). This method leverages the FOMO (fear of missing out) phenomenon and herd mentality, convincing people to believe that a product is widely trusted or in high demand, making them more likely to think they should try it.



**Figure 2: Customer testimonials and endorsements**

Company websites that provide an ingredients tab build trust through transparency. By allowing the consumer to fully explore which ingredients are in the products they purchase (refer to Figure 3), the benefits of the ingredients, and completely breaking down how the ingredients work together to achieve the product's goal, a consumer can see what exactly they are purchasing. It is practical among individuals who worry about hidden chemicals, allergens, or artificial additives. This method also reframes ingredients from a chemical name to a purposeful benefit.. This method signals that a brand has nothing to

hide from its customers. It builds brand loyalty by giving in-platform explanations to ensure customers stay on a particular site or product page instead of leaving to search in the competition. Consumers are more likely to continue to buy from that brand, which increases customer retention rates.



**Figure 3: Brand Transparency**

Brands that address the consumer directly develop a sense of intimacy and personalization with the customer, causing consumers to insert themselves into the brand's story naturally. In the ads, the quotes "Made to care for you every day" or "Avon Espira: A Healthier You" (figure 4) causes the brand to position itself as a partner in the consumer's wellness journey, making the brand feel like a friend or an ally rather than just a seller. The word choice in these ads creates a nurturing vibe, since utilizing care language can trigger trust. This also helps in reducing skepticism. Quotes like "Made to care for you every day" and "Beautiful skin begins from within" (figure 4) emphasize ongoing support, not one-off results.



**Figure 4: Personalized Intimacy & Daily Ritual**

This method reinforces the product as a part of a daily ritual, shifting the concept of supplements from "extra" to "essential". These ads also celebrate personal worth and individuality by emphasizing the consumers' uniqueness, subtly suggesting the consumer deserves premium care (which they can gain through purchasing these products) because of their uniqueness. Everyone wants to feel seen and valued; these phrases directly affirm that.

## HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Buzzword-heavy marketing in wellness advertisements often overwhelms consumers and reduces perceptions of transparency (Sigler, 2023; Grev, 2016). Adolescents are especially vulnerable, as

excessive buzzwords distort perceptions and exploit cognitive biases (Fathurohman et al., 2023; Boush et al., 2009). Content analysis shows that such language correlates with feelings of overwhelm and perceptions of deception.

H1: Buzzword-heavy marketing in wellness ads can overwhelm consumers and reduce perceived transparency.

Transparency, through clear ingredient disclosure and straightforward messaging, reduces perceived risk and fosters trust (Wu & Geylani, 2020; Sprague & Wells, 2010). Content analysis shows ingredient tabs increase confidence, though adolescent media literacy gaps may weaken the link between stated and actual preferences.

H2: Transparency fosters trust and loyalty, as brands that clearly disclose ingredients and benefits reduce perceived risk.

Consumers who research products prefer evidence-based claims and ingredient lists over vague buzzwords (Naik et al., 2023; Fathurohman et al., 2023). Content analysis supports this by showing that clear, verifiable information enables informed choices.

H3: Consumers who research products prefer clear ingredient lists and evidence-based claims over vague, buzzword-heavy alternatives.

While evidence-backed claims enhance credibility (Grev, 2016; Wu & Geylani, 2020), statistics alone rarely persuade adolescents, who rely more on visuals and peer influence (Naik et al., 2023; Bohannon, 2023). Content analysis confirms that uncontextualized numbers have limited effect.

H4: While evidence-backed claims build trust, statistical or numerical claims alone have limited impact, especially among adolescents.

## **SURVEY**

The survey, conducted via Google Forms from August 20–26, targeted consumers in the wellness industry (nutricosmetics, supplements, superfoods). A total of 102 individuals participated. Participants were recruited through personal outreach, including direct texting and asking individuals to voluntarily complete the survey, and these participants were encouraged to share the survey with peers, allowing for a snowball sampling approach. It included two question types: opinion-based Likert scale questions and comparative choice-based questions. Likert scale items measured brand ad literacy, understanding how consumers research products, recognize marketing specific language, and distinguish between exaggerated claims and evidence-backed facts (questions 1, 2, 5, 8). The goal was to determine the participants' awareness of marketing strategies and their ability to scrutinize claims. They also evaluated which marketing tactics trigger feelings of overwhelm or influence self-perception (questions 3, 7, 9). The survey addressed the impact of transparency on willingness to purchase and brand loyalty (questions 4, 6, 11-14), in order to measure the behavioral outcomes of marketing exposure, including which tactics successfully influence trust and purchase decisions. Lastly, the survey collected demographic information, including participant age and gender, to analyze patterns across consumer subgroups (questions 15 & 16).

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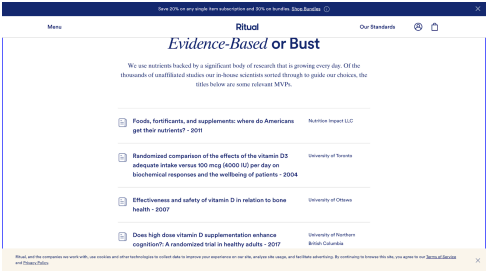
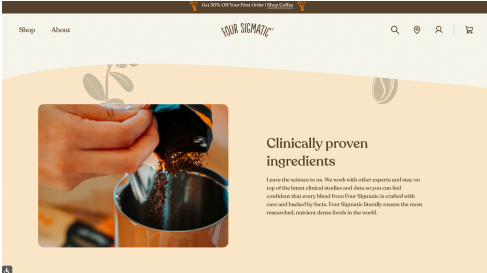

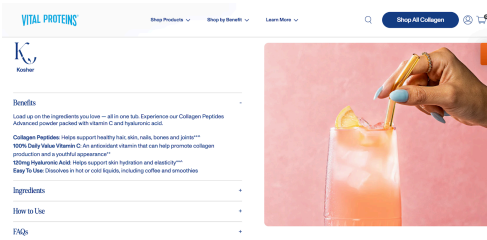

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This allowed the study to analyze whether adolescents respond differently to marketing tactics than older consumers and to identify potential differences in preferences or vulnerabilities across demographic groups. Comparative choice-based questions asked participants between buzzword-heavy (Version A) and straightforward (Version B) marketing, revealing whether persuasive language influenced purchasing decisions, formats examined self-reported perceptions and actual decision-making, offering insight into consumer trust, susceptibility, and preferences, particularly among adolescents. Together, the Likert scale and comparative questions allow the study to trace a pathway from consumers' awareness of marketing tactics, through emotional responses, to behavioral outcomes (such as trust and purchasing preferences), and this allows the research to evaluate which strategies are influential, which contribute to insecurity, and how transparency and evidence-based claims can improve consumer confidence. To ensure participant safety, the survey guaranteed anonymity and required informed consent for voluntary participation.



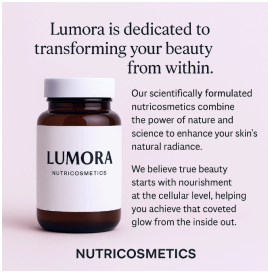
**Table 2: Survey Questionnaire**

Hi! My name is Rishika Ghora, and I am an 11th-grade student currently studying at DOWNTOWN STEM Academy. I am conducting a study to explore how we can reimagine ethical marketing within the wellness industry and hold them accountable for using cross-sector marketing buzzwords that influence consumer perception and loyalty, fueling adolescent insecurity while preserving innovative growth. I intend to thoroughly delve into how this sector can improve with transparency to ensure adolescents' well-being. Please fill out the survey form for academic purposes. I assure the confidentiality and security of your data. Thank you!		
Questions	Options	% Response
1. You do research on a brand/product before purchasing	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	9 11 15 33 32
2. When a brand uses buzzwords (clean, detox, natural, clinically formulated, organic), it overwhelms you.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	15 25 35 4 21
3. If a brand uses many buzzwords, you will likely buy the product, hoping it will work as promised.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	15 21 20 33 11
4. You are more likely to buy	1. Strongly disagree	0

a product if it provides evidence (statistics, numbers, client results) to back up claims (ex., Guaranteed hair-strengthening formula)	2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	0 10 32 58
5. I often find wellness ads misleading or exaggerating	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	2 6 32 30 30
6. I am more likely to continue repurchasing from a brand if they are fully transparent (with disclaimers and evidence-backed claims)	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	0 1 9 36 54
7. Have you ever seen an ad for something you did not think you needed, but after it mentioned a problem you did not even know you had (like cellulite or wrinkles), you suddenly wanted it?	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	7 15 21 23 34
8. I can usually distinguish between exaggerated claims and scientifically supported information in ads	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	11 6 18 35 30
9. I would avoid products if I knew their marketing intentionally exploited insecurities.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	4 5 11 27 53
10. Brands should prioritize consumer mental health over sales growth.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree	5 3 17 22

	<p>5. Strongly Agree</p>	<p>53</p>
<p>11. Which brand are you more likely to trust</p>	<p>A. </p> <p>B. </p>	<p>71 30</p>
<p>12. Which product are you more likely to choose</p>	<p>A. </p> <p>B. </p>	<p>5 95</p>
<p>13. Which product are you more likely to choose</p>	<p>A. </p>	<p>38 63</p>

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	<p>B.</p> 	
14. Which product are you more likely to choose	<p>A.</p>  <p>B.</p> 	84 16
15. Age?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under 14 years old</li> <li>- 14-18 yrs</li> <li>- 20-25 yrs</li> <li>- Above 25</li> </ul>	10 71 10 10
16. Select if you are a female, male, other, or prefer not to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Female</li> <li>● Male</li> <li>● Other</li> <li>● Prefer not to say</li> </ul>	51 49 1 2

## SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results highlight consumer skepticism toward wellness (nutricosmetics) advertising, with nearly half of respondents (30% strongly agree; 30% agree) perceiving ads as misleading or exaggerated, while 32% remain neutral and only 8% express confidence. Results further show that evidence-based claims drive consumer trust, as 90% (58% strongly agree; 32% agree) report being more likely to purchase with

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supporting evidence, while just 10% remain neutral. Question #6 underscores the importance of brand transparency, with 90% valuing it, 9% neutral, and only 1% in disagreement. Question #7 addresses self-perception and insecurity, finding that 57% (34% strongly agree; 23% agree) felt influenced by ads highlighting problems they had not considered, suggesting that such strategies may reinforce negative self-image and consumer insecurity.

### **Correlation and Regression Analysis**

Correlation and regression analyses appraised the relationships between consumer perceptions, purchasing behaviors, and responses to wellness marketing strategies. Regression analysis was applied to determine how much one factor predicts another, providing insight into how marketing tactics influence consumer trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. For each outcome  $Y_i$  (e.g., perceiving ads as misleading, preferring transparent brands, selecting ingredient-listed products), a simple linear regression was used:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \epsilon_i$$

where  $X_i$  represents the predictor variable (e.g., feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords, repurchase likelihood, research habits, preference for evidence-backed products),  $\beta_0$  is the intercept,  $\beta_1$  the coefficient, and  $\epsilon_i$  the error term. These models are bivariate, with no additional controls included.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Predictor Outcome</b> →	<b>R-square d</b>	<b>Coefficient t</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Model 1	Feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords → Perceiving ads as misleading/exaggerating	0.281	0.53***	0.00000002	The regression analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords and perceiving ads as misleading. Approximately 28% of the variance in perceptions of misleading ads is explained by the extent to which individuals feel overwhelmed by

					buzzwords.
Model 2	Willingness to repurchase from transparent brands → Actual preference for transparent brands	0.04	-0.20*	0.04657295	The analysis indicated a weak but statistically significant negative relationship between willingness to repurchase from transparent brands and the actual preference for transparent brands.
Model 3	Researching before purchase → Preference for products with listed ingredients	0.0576	0.24*	0.015859097	Results demonstrated a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between conducting research before purchase and choosing products with listed ingredients over buzzword-heavy alternatives.
Model 4	Preference for evidence-backed products → Choosing a product with a statistical claim	0.000784	0.028	0.77900796	The regression revealed a negligible relationship between preferring evidence-backed products and actually selecting a product with a statistical claim,

					which was not statistically significant.
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The regression analysis further clarifies how consumer perceptions and behaviors are influenced by wellness marketing. Feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords strongly predicts finding nutricosmetic ads as misleading or exaggerated, accounting for 28% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.281$ ,  $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Willingness to repurchase from transparent brands shows a weak but significant negative relationship with actual preference for transparent brands ( $R^2 = 0.04$ ,  $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ). Similarly, researching products before purchase weakly predicts a preference for items with listed ingredients over buzzword-heavy alternatives ( $R^2 = 0.058$ ,  $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ). In contrast, preferring evidence-backed products does not significantly predict choosing a product with a statistical claim ( $R^2 = 0.0008$ ,  $\beta = 0.028$ ,  $p = 0.779$ ).



**Figure 5: Regression Model of Consumer Correlations**

Correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) were used to measure the strength and direction of relationships between variables such as feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords, perceiving ads as misleading, researching before purchasing, and selecting products based on transparency or statistical evidence. Correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) range from -1 to +1, where values closer to +1 indicate a strong positive relationship, values closer to -1 indicate a strong negative relationship, and values near 0 suggest little to no linear relationship between the variables.

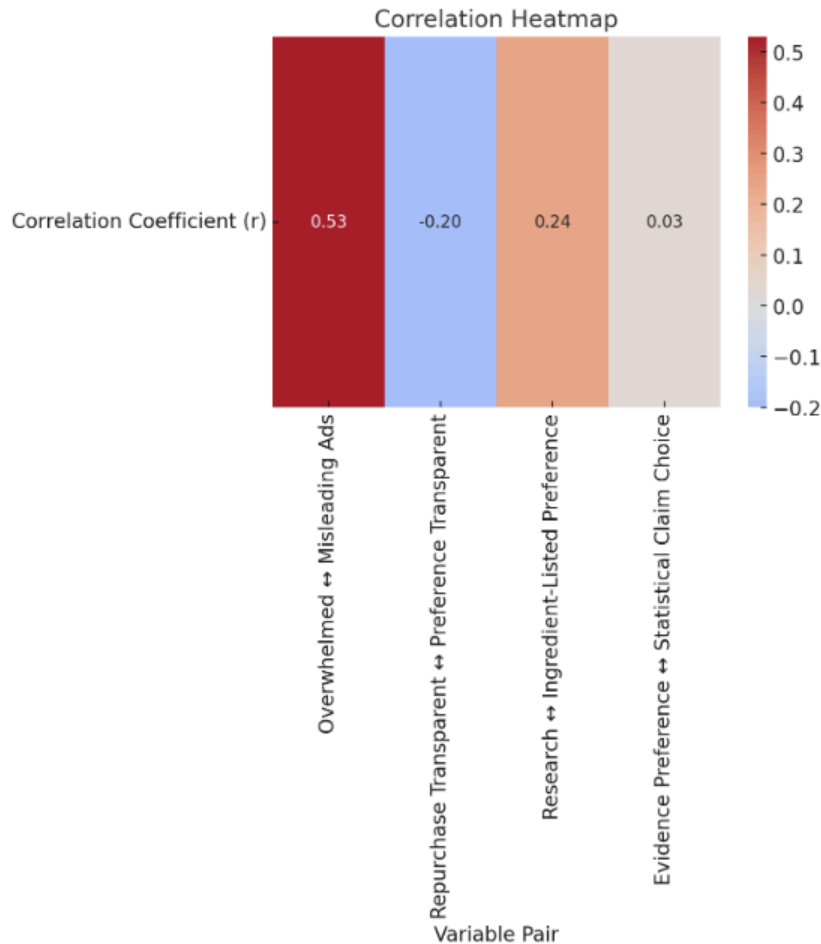
**Table 4: Correlation Analysis**

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ )	p-value	Interpretation

Overwhelmed by buzzwords and finding nutricosmetic ads exaggerating/misleading	0.53	0.00000002	Individuals who feel overwhelmed by buzzwords in brand communications are more likely to find wellness ads misleading or exaggerating, and vice versa
Repurchasing from transparent brands and actual preference transparent brands	-0.20	0.04657295	A statistically significant relationship exists between the stated willingness to repurchase from a transparent brand and the actual preference for a transparent brand. Consumers more likely to repurchase from a transparent brand tend to prefer transparent brands when given a choice.
Researching before purchasing a product and preferring products with listed ingredients and direct benefits to blurbs of buzzwords, the product	0.24	0.015859097	There is a slight tendency for people who research to prefer products with listed ingredients
Being more likely to buy a product if it provides evidence to back up claims, and choosing a product with a statistical claim over a product that only utilizes buzzwords	0.028	0.77900796	Merely stating a claim does not necessarily increase consumer purchase intent; brands must consistently provide supporting evidence and maintain transparency in their messaging to build trust and influence buying behavior.

The correlation analysis in Table 3 reveals several key patterns in consumer responses to nutricosmetic advertising. Individuals overwhelmed by buzzwords are significantly more likely to perceive wellness ads as exaggerated or misleading ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). A small but statistically significant relationship exists between willingness to repurchase from transparent brands and actual preference for transparent brands ( $r = -0.20$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ). Consumers who research products prefer items with clearly listed ingredients and

direct benefits over those relying on buzzwords ( $r = 0.24, p = 0.016$ ). However, statistical claims without supporting evidence do not meaningfully influence purchase intent ( $r = 0.028, p = 0.779$ ).



**Figure 6: Heatmap of Consumer Correlations**

### Hypothesis Testing Results:

**H1: A statistically significant positive relationship exists between consumers feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords in wellness advertisements and their likelihood of perceiving those ads as misleading or exaggerated.**

- Correlation:  $r = 0.53, p < 0.001$
- Regression:  $R^2 = 0.281, \beta = 0.53, p < 0.001$
- Outcome: H1 is supported.

**H2: Consumers willing to repurchase from transparent brands are also more likely to prefer transparent brands when given a choice.**

- Correlation:  $r = -0.20, p = 0.046$
- Regression:  $R^2 = 0.04, \beta = -0.20, p = 0.047$

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- Outcome: H2 is supported, though the relationship is weak and negative.

**H3: A positive relationship exists between consumers researching before purchasing and their preference for ingredient-listed products over buzzword-heavy alternatives.**

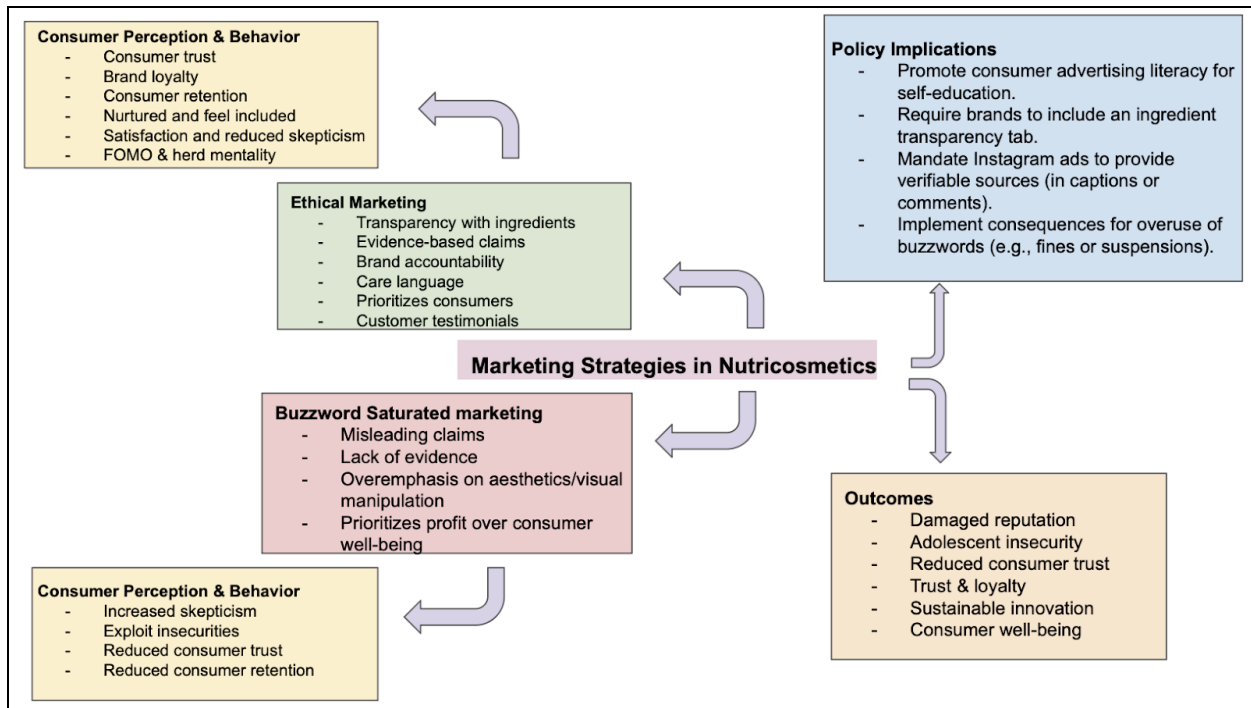
- Correlation:  $r = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.016$
- Regression:  $R^2 = 0.058$ ,  $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.016$
- Outcome: H3 is supported.

**H4: A statistically significant positive relationship exists between consumers who prefer evidence-backed products and their likelihood of choosing a product with a statistical claim over one relying on buzzwords.**

- Correlation:  $r = 0.028$ ,  $p = 0.779$
- Regression:  $R^2 = 0.00078$ ,  $\beta = 0.028$ ,  $p = 0.779$
- Outcome: H4 is not supported.

## DISCUSSION

Integrating content analysis, quantitative survey findings, and existing literature reveals a profound cognizance of how buzzword-heavy marketing within the nutricosmetic sector influences consumer trust, loyalty, and psychological well-being, particularly among adolescents. The analysis addresses the central research question by examining (1) how wellness brands employ emotionally charged yet vague terminology to attract consumers and position themselves as credible, and (2) how this reliance on buzzwords influences consumer perceptions of transparency, brand loyalty, and insecurity. This discussion interprets the results presented in the preceding section, which showed that: H1 was supported ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that adolescents who feel overwhelmed by buzzwords perceive ads as misleading; H2 showed a weak negative relationship ( $r = -0.20$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ) between stated loyalty and actual preference for transparent brands and this gap may indicate that stated loyalty does not always translate to actual product selection; H3 showed a weak positive relationship ( $r = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ) linking research behaviors to ingredient preference and this supports the hypothesis—informed consumers value clarity and evidence over persuasive but vague claims; H4 was not supported ( $r = 0.028$ ,  $p = 0.779$ ), indicating statistical claims alone do not influence purchasing intent. Figure 7 shows the "Process Framework for Impact of Buzzword Marketing Strategies in Nutricosmetics Industry", which visually represents a cyclical model illustrating how wellness brands' marketing tactics, particularly buzzwords, influence consumer behavior and perceptions, ultimately impacting societal well-being. This framework outlines the interconnected stages of marketing strategy, consumer response, and the resulting outcomes, emphasizing positive aspects like innovation and negative consequences such as increased insecurity and skepticism.



**Figure 7: Process Framework for Impact of Buzzword Marketing Strategies in Nutricosmetics Industry**

The Process Framework implies a continuous feedback loop where consumer reactions (skepticism, demand for transparency) can, in an ideal scenario, influence brands to adopt more ethical marketing strategies. The framework illustrates that while buzzword marketing can be a powerful tool for short-term gains in the nutricosmetics industry, its long-term consequences include eroding consumer trust and negatively impacting mental health, signaling the imperative for an "honesty makeover" that prioritizes ethical, transparent, and evidence-backed communication.

When linked to existing research, this framework underscores the ethical dilemma at the heart of wellness marketing. Studies show that emotionally charged buzzwords not only attract sales (Sigler, 2023) but also distort self-image (Naik, Patel, Atre, 2023), particularly for adolescents navigating cycles of insecurity. The reliance on vague, unregulated terms heightens this issue by creating a gap between consumer perception and scientific clarity, leaving individuals vulnerable to manipulation.

The survey findings align with this literature. Specifically, feeling overwhelmed by buzzwords strongly predicted perceiving ads as misleading, supporting prior research on manipulative marketing language. Consumers who research products preferred ingredient-listed items, emphasizing the value of limpidity. The weak or non-significant results for actual purchasing of transparent brands and statistical claims suggest that stated intentions do not always translate into behavior, which reinforces the complexity of consumer decision-making in this market.

The discussion thus shifts from identifying the problem to proposing solutions. By restructuring marketing practices toward transparency and accountability, wellness brands can foster consumer trust without sacrificing innovation. The framework challenges the notion that ambiguity and deceptive buzzwords are essential for success, instead suggesting that sustainable growth depends on clarity, evidence-based messaging, and ethical branding. Ultimately, this paper situates the wellness industry's reliance on buzzwords within a broader conversation about consumer protection, youth mental health, and the future of ethical marketing.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Existing studies show that wellness companies often use emotionally charged buzzwords to attract attention, funding, and sales (Sigler, 2023). Research has also highlighted how manipulated advertising content can distort self-image (Naik, Patel, Atre, 2023), especially among young girls and teens targeted by these brands. Social media further reinforces these cycles of insecurity and validation-seeking. Together, these findings reveal a growing concern: persuasive wellness marketing lacks accountability and may exploit adolescent vulnerabilities. Despite this, few studies have directly measured how vague and unregulated marketing language impacts consumer trust, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This study was limited due to the age-skewed survey sample and the focus on solely the United States. Future research could examine a more demographically diverse and age-balanced sample to improve generalizability. Longitudinal studies may assess the long-term effects of buzzword-heavy versus transparent advertising on consumer trust and loyalty. Brands should apply these insights to refine marketing strategies that uphold accountability and align with ethical standards.

## **POLICY AND INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Integrating brand advertising literacy into school curricula has the potential to yield long-term benefits by shaping critical consumers from an early age. Such initiatives would enable students to recognize deceptive marketing practices, thereby protecting their mental health and mitigating insecurities often amplified by wellness brand advertising. Incorporating this content into existing media literacy or health education curricula would ensure feasibility without overburdening educators.

In addition, wellness brands should be required to provide standardized consumer education pages on their websites, allowing cross-brand comparison and greater transparency. These pages should include complete ingredient disclosures and scientifically supported explanations of associated benefits, ideally referencing peer-reviewed studies rather than relying solely on brand-generated claims. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, should likewise be required to ensure accountability by mandating that advertisements contain verifiable sources. A practical mechanism for this could be implementing

“fact-check-style” expandable boxes beneath advertisements, enforced by regulatory bodies such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

A structured penalty system should be introduced for brands that overuse vague or unsubstantiated buzzwords to deter misleading practices. This system could escalate from warnings to monetary fines, temporary suspensions, thereby creating tangible consequences for deceptive advertising strategies. Furthermore, these warnings should be disclosed to consumers for transparency, allowing them to make more informed purchasing decisions and holding brands publicly accountable for their marketing practices. Public disclosure incentivizes compliance and reinforces trust between consumers and companies that adhere to ethical standards.

Finally, consumer involvement is paramount for the legitimacy and effectiveness of regulatory standards. Collaboration among regulators, scientific experts, and consumer panels would guarantee that guidelines are evidence-based and responsive to public concerns. Mechanisms for consumer engagement would include structured public consultation platforms, similar to the open comment periods facilitated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

## CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate how marketing buzzwords in the wellness and nutricosmetics industry influence consumer perceptions, brand loyalty, and adolescent insecurities, and to explore strategies for promoting ethical, transparent, and evidence-based marketing practices that build trust and support societal well-being. The findings show that consumers who feel overwhelmed by buzzwords are significantly more likely to view wellness ads as misleading. In contrast, research-oriented consumers prefer ingredient-listed products over vague claims. Transparency and evidence-based messaging were consistently valued, though stated loyalty to transparent brands did not always translate into actual purchasing behavior. Statistical claims alone did not increase purchase intent, underscoring that consistent honesty and clarity are more effective than persuasive language. The results suggest that while buzzwords may capture attention, transparency and evidence are stronger factors of trust, credibility, and long-term consumer loyalty.

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