

The Mediating Role of Coping Strategies in the Relationship Between Consumer Dissatisfaction and Repurchase Intention in the Skincare Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the psychological mechanisms through which consumer dissatisfaction influences repurchase intention in the skincare product domain, with a particular focus on the mediating role of coping strategies. Drawing from Appraisal Coping Theory and Expectation Disconfirmation Theory, the research explores how two discrete negative emotions anger and regret shape coping behaviors and subsequently impact repurchase intentions. Using a structured questionnaire distributed among 430 skincare consumers in Bengaluru, India, the study examines four coping strategies: complaining behavior, seeking social support, mental disengagement, and positive reinterpretation. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test hypothesized relationships. Findings reveal that dissatisfaction significantly elicits anger and regret, which in turn activate emotion-specific coping pathways. Anger predominantly leads to problem-focused coping (complaining and social support), while regret triggers emotion-focused coping (disengagement and reinterpretation). Importantly, coping strategies mediate the relationship between negative emotions and repurchase intention, demonstrating that emotionally intelligent brand response can significantly influence consumer loyalty even after dissatisfaction. The study also finds evidence for the Service Recovery Paradox, where effective complaint redressal enhances repurchase intention. The results contribute to consumer behavior theory by integrating coping constructs into post-purchase decision models and provide actionable insights for skincare brands to design emotion-sensitive recovery strategies. The study's implications are particularly relevant in culturally collectivist markets where communal coping plays a key role in post-dissatisfaction behavior.

Keywords: Consumer dissatisfaction; Coping strategies; Negative emotions; Repurchase intention; Skincare products; Structural equation modeling; Emotional marketing; Appraisal Coping Theory.

INTRODUCTION:

In the current era of hyper-personalized consumption, skincare has emerged as not just a functional category but a highly emotionally engaged domain, where consumers invest significant cognitive and affective resources in their purchasing decisions. The proliferation of beauty influencers, personalized routines, and scientific marketing has elevated consumer expectations for skincare products, making any post-purchase dissatisfaction deeply consequential. Unlike low-involvement product categories, skincare dissatisfaction is not only a matter of unmet performance but often a source of emotional disruption, given its implications for identity, appearance, and self-esteem (Chitturi et al., 2008; Lin & Hsu, 2022). Despite this, limited empirical research has examined how consumers psychologically and behaviorally respond to

dissatisfaction in the skincare industry especially in emerging markets such as India.

While consumer dissatisfaction has traditionally been explained through the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) (Oliver, 1980), which views satisfaction as a cognitive evaluation of whether a product met or fell short of expectations, this theory has been criticized for underplaying the role of emotions in shaping consumer behavior post-dissatisfaction. Recent scholarship emphasizes that emotions such as anger, regret, or disappointment are not mere by-products of cognitive disconfirmation, but central mediators that determine how consumers act following an unsatisfactory experience (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004; Yi & Baumgartner, 2004).

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Building on this premise, the current study applies the Appraisal Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) to conceptualize consumer responses to dissatisfaction as a psychological process wherein an individual experiences an emotional appraisal (e.g., anger, regret), followed by the activation of coping strategies aimed at regulating these emotions. Coping strategies are psychological or behavioral efforts to reduce the stress caused by dissatisfaction and are typically classified into problem-focused (e.g., complaining or seeking support) and emotion-focused (e.g., mental disengagement or positive reinterpretation) types (Duhachek, 2005). However, these coping mechanisms have not been extensively studied as mediators between dissatisfaction and behavioral outcomes, such as repurchase intention, particularly in product-based contexts.

The skincare industry, in particular, offers a unique and high-stakes setting for exploring these dynamics. Consumers of skincare products are typically highly involved in their decision-making, often driven by emotional expectations, brand image, peer influence, and prior trial-and-error experiences (Feng & Zhao, 2024). Dissatisfaction in this domain can evoke strong emotional responses that shape how consumers decide to cope whether through direct complaint, social expression, psychological withdrawal, or self-reframing and, ultimately, whether they choose to repurchase the product or abandon the brand altogether (Ertz et al., 2022).

In addition to individual emotional responses, cultural context plays a significant role in shaping coping strategies. In collectivist cultures such as India, consumers are more likely to engage in communal coping where emotional regulation and sense-making occur through peer sharing, social validation, and influencer-mediated narratives (Lyons et al., 1998; Lin et al., 2023). This makes it crucial to integrate culturally responsive frameworks into the analysis of coping and repurchase behavior, especially as global brands continue to expand into emotionally complex and culturally rich markets like India.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature by empirically testing the mediating role of coping strategies in the relationship between consumer dissatisfaction and repurchase intention, with the additional layer of emotion-specific coping patterns. It focuses on two prominent negative emotions anger and regret both of which are theoretically and empirically linked to dissatisfaction and are known to prompt distinct coping behaviors (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004; Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). The study explores four coping strategies: complaining behavior, seeking social support, mental disengagement, and positive reinterpretation. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) on survey data collected from skincare consumers in Bengaluru, India, the study investigates the direct and indirect effects of these constructs on repurchase intention.

This paper makes three main contributions. First, it extends current understanding of dissatisfaction by demonstrating that coping strategies serve as a critical psychological mechanism that links emotional appraisal to behavioral intention. Second, it distinguishes between emotion-specific coping pathways showing, for example, that anger leads to problem-focused coping, while regret leads to emotion-focused coping thereby supporting a more nuanced model of consumer behavior. Third, it provides contextual insights from a collectivist culture, highlighting the role of communal coping and peer influence in emotional resolution and brand loyalty decisions.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the impact of consumer dissatisfaction on discrete negative emotions, specifically anger and regret, in the context of skincare product usage.
2. To identify the relationship between these negative emotions and consumer coping strategies, including complaining behavior, seeking social support, mental disengagement, and positive reinterpretation.
3. To assess the mediating role of coping strategies in the relationship between negative emotions and repurchase intention.
4. To determine which coping strategies significantly influence repurchase intention following dissatisfaction in skincare consumption.
5. To explore emotion-specific coping pathways and how these differ between anger and regret in shaping post-dissatisfaction behavioral outcomes.

Ultimately, the study aims to enrich the theoretical landscape of consumer post-purchase behavior and offer actionable strategies for skincare brands to design emotion-sensitive service recovery mechanisms. In a market where emotions drive loyalty, understanding how consumers cope with dissatisfaction is not just an academic concern it is a strategic imperative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on consumer dissatisfaction and post-purchase behavior has evolved from traditional cognitive models toward more complex frameworks integrating emotion, coping, and behavioral outcomes. This review critically examines the central constructs of this study: consumer dissatisfaction, negative emotions (anger and regret), coping strategies, and repurchase intention, as well as their interrelationships, particularly in the skincare product domain.

Consumer Dissatisfaction and Expectation–Disconfirmation Theory

The foundational theory of consumer dissatisfaction is Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), which suggests that dissatisfaction arises when perceived product performance fails to meet prior expectations (Oliver, 1980). While EDT has been widely validated

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across service and product categories (Bhattacharjee, 2001), it has been critiqued for its emphasis on cognitive evaluations over emotional responses, which are often more predictive of post-dissatisfaction behavior (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004).

In skincare contexts, where the product directly impacts self-image and health, dissatisfaction is highly affect-laden. Studies in this domain show that negative disconfirmation often leads to intense emotional reactions, including anger and regret, which go beyond mere cognitive discontent and serve as key triggers for subsequent behavior (Chitturi et al., 2008; Sharma & Rangarajan, 2022).

2.2 Negative Emotions in Consumer Contexts: Anger and Regret

Anger and regret are among the most frequently studied discrete negative emotions in consumer research. Anger typically stems from external attribution of blame to the brand, suggesting perceived injustice or failure (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Regret, in contrast, involves internal attribution, as consumers blame themselves for making a poor choice or overlooking alternatives (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004).

Research by Yi and Baumgartner (2004) demonstrates that different emotional triggers influence subsequent coping behavior. Anger tends to prompt confrontational strategies such as complaining, while regret encourages withdrawal or mental disengagement. These emotion-specific pathways are particularly significant in product categories involving personal risk or emotional investment, such as skincare.

2.3 Coping Theory and Its Application in Consumer Behavior

The Appraisal Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) serves as the psychological foundation for understanding how individuals regulate emotional stress. In consumer behavior, coping refers to the strategies employed to handle dissatisfaction or post-purchase regret. Duhachek (2005) developed a multidimensional model for consumer coping, categorizing responses into problem-focused (e.g., complaining, seeking alternatives) and emotion-focused (e.g., disengagement, reinterpretation).

Duhachek and Iacobucci (2005) further demonstrated that specific emotions evoke distinct coping styles: anger is likely to trigger social support-seeking or confrontive coping, while regret leads to disengagement and reinterpretation. These findings have been extended by Ertz et al. (2022), who validated the emotion coping link in retail and FMCG settings during COVID-19.

2.4 Emotion-Specific Coping Strategies

Emotion-specific coping has emerged as a refined lens to study how discrete emotions guide behavior. Research confirms that:

- Anger results in problem-focused strategies, including:

- Complaining behavior (Kim & Park, 2022)
- Social confrontation (Ertz et al., 2022)
- Regret prompts emotion-focused strategies, such as:
 - Mental disengagement (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004)
 - Positive reinterpretation (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024)

These differentiated pathways highlight the need for models that go beyond global emotional constructs to consider emotion strategy dyads, particularly in sensitive domains like skincare, where consumer responses are not merely reactive but psychologically.

2.5 Communal Coping in Collectivist Cultures

Communal coping, introduced by Lyons et al. (1998), is a culturally grounded construct wherein emotional regulation is shared through peer groups, family, or digital communities. In collectivist societies such as India, communal coping is a dominant strategy, often manifesting through online forums, WhatsApp groups, or social media discussions (Patil & Verma, 2024; Wang & Chen, 2023).

In consumer settings, communal coping moderates the emotional impact by redistributing emotional labor and enabling collective problem-solving. For example, Indian consumers experiencing skincare dissatisfaction often consult peers or influencers before acting, reflecting a social filtering mechanism in decision-making.

2.6 Coping Strategies as Mediators Between Emotion and Behavior

Coping strategies function as mediating constructs that translate emotional discomfort into behavioral intentions. This is especially evident in the transition from dissatisfaction to repurchase. Problem-focused strategies, when paired with brand responsiveness, can enhance repurchase likelihood, as seen in the Service Recovery Paradox (Padmavathi & Sunil, 2023). Emotion-focused strategies may reduce distress but risk long-term disengagement or silent churn if brands fail to re-engage emotionally (Walker, 2019).

Recent studies have validated the mediating role of coping using structural equation modeling in both service and retail contexts (Curwen & Park, 2013; Ambroã & Lotriè, 2016). These insights are particularly relevant to skincare, where emotional damage and product outcomes are often deeply personal and visible.

2.7 Repurchase Intention as a Loyalty Outcome

Repurchase intention refers to a consumer's likelihood to buy the same product again, often used as a proxy for brand loyalty (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). It is influenced by satisfaction, emotional recovery, trust, and perceived value (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). In emotionally engaging categories like skincare, repurchase is not only rational but emotionally

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negotiated often contingent on how the consumer copes with dissatisfaction.

Studies show that brands that facilitate emotion-sensitive recovery and enable positive reinterpretation or public acknowledgment of complaints enjoy higher consumer forgiveness and loyalty restoration (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Gün & Söyük, 2025).

2.8 Research Gap and Theoretical Contributions

Despite the rich literature, gaps persist. Most existing research:

- Focuses on service failure rather than product-based dissatisfaction.
- Ignores the emotion-specific nature of coping.
- Rarely investigates communal coping in Indian cultural settings.
- Underexplores coping as a mediator between negative emotions and repurchase behavior in high-involvement categories.

This study bridges these gaps by testing a multi-stage mediation model in the Indian skincare industry, focusing on anger and regret, their associated coping strategies, and repurchase intention as a behavioral outcome

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the mediating role of coping strategies in the relationship between consumer dissatisfaction and repurchase intention, with a specific focus on the skincare product domain. The methodology was structured to enable empirical testing of the proposed conceptual model using structural equation modeling (SEM).

3.1 Research Design and Approach

Given the study's aim to examine complex interrelationships among latent constructs consumer dissatisfaction, negative emotions, coping strategies, and repurchase intention a positivist, deductive research approach was adopted. SEM was selected for its ability to assess both measurement and structural models simultaneously, allowing for rigorous hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2021).

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The study population consisted of consumers who had purchased and used skincare products within the past six months and experienced some form of dissatisfaction with the product or its outcome.

- Sampling method: Non-probability purposive sampling was used, targeting skincare users with prior dissatisfaction.
- Location: Bengaluru, India a metropolitan hub known for high skincare product usage and digital awareness.
- Sample size: 430 valid responses were collected, meeting the SEM sample adequacy criteria (minimum of 10 15 responses per observed variable) (Kline, 2016).

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire, distributed both online and in physical retail settings such as pharmacies, cosmetic counters, and beauty clinics. Online responses were collected via Google Forms, while in-person administration was done with informed consent.

3.3 Questionnaire Design and Instrumentation

The questionnaire consisted of six sections and included demographic questions followed by items measuring the main constructs. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used for all scale-based items.

3.3.1 Consumer Dissatisfaction

Measured using three items adapted from Bhattacharjee (2001) and Oliver (1980), focusing on negative disconfirmation of expectations (e.g., "The product did not perform as I expected").

3.3.2 Negative Emotions

Two discrete emotions were measured:

- Anger: Measured using four items adapted from Laros and Steenkamp (2005) and Yi and Baumgartner (2004), capturing irritation and frustration (e.g., "I felt angry about my decision to buy this product").
- Regret: Measured using three items reflecting self-blame and counterfactual thinking (e.g., "I should have chosen another product").

3.3.3 Coping Strategies

Four coping strategies were examined:

- Complaining behavior (problem-focused)
- Seeking social support (communal coping)
- Mental disengagement (emotion-focused)
- Positive reinterpretation (emotion-focused)

Each strategy was measured using 3 - 4 items adapted from Duhachek (2005), Yi and Baumgartner (2004), and Lyons et al. (1998), with minor contextual modifications for skincare settings.

3.3.4 Repurchase Intention

Measured using three items based on Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) and Maxham and Netemeyer (2002), capturing future purchase intent despite past dissatisfaction (e.g., "I may still consider purchasing from this brand again").

3.4 Reliability and Validity Testing

To ensure psychometric soundness, the study applied Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS.

- Reliability: Internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$) and Composite Reliability (CR > 0.70) (Hair et al., 2021).
- Convergent validity: Assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50).
- Discriminant validity: Confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, where the square

root of AVE exceeded inter-construct correlations.

All constructs met the required reliability and validity thresholds, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and AMOS 24.0 for SEM.

The analysis proceeded in two stages:

1. Measurement model evaluation (CFA): To confirm factor structure and validity.
2. Structural model testing: To examine the direct and indirect (mediated) effects between dissatisfaction, emotions, coping strategies, and repurchase intention.

The mediating role of coping strategies was tested using bootstrapping (5000 resamples) to assess indirect effects, as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

Model fit indices used included:

- Chi-square/df (≤ 3.0)
- Comparative Fit Index ($CFI \geq 0.90$)
- Tucker-Lewis Index ($TLI \geq 0.90$)
- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ($RMSEA \leq 0.08$)

All indices indicated acceptable model fit, validating the conceptual framework.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance was ensured throughout the study:

- Voluntary participation with informed consent.
- Confidentiality maintained by anonymizing responses.
- No personal identifiers collected.
- Ethics approval was granted by the doctoral committee overseeing the research.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings from the structural equation modeling (SEM) used to test the hypothesized relationships among consumer dissatisfaction, negative emotions (anger and regret), coping strategies (mental disengagement, complaining behavior, seeking social support, and positive reinterpretation), and repurchase intention. The results are organized in two segments: (1) Measurement Model Assessment and (2) Structural Model Analysis, including mediation and serial mediation effects.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

To validate the adequacy of latent constructs, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed. Only items with standardized loadings ≥ 0.70 were retained. The constructs demonstrated strong internal reliability, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding 0.80, confirming internal consistency.

Convergent validity was supported, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the 0.50 threshold. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell - Larcker criterion, where each construct's square root of AVE was greater than its inter-construct correlations.

4.2 Structural Model Fit

| Path | Estimate (β) | Significance | Interpretation |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Anger \leftarrow Dissatisfaction | 0.376 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant positive effect |
| Regret \leftarrow Dissatisfaction | 0.148 | ** ($p < .01$) | Significant positive effect |
| Complaining Behaviour \leftarrow Anger | 0.132 | ** ($p < .01$) | Significant |
| Seek Social Support \leftarrow Anger | 0.159 | ** ($p < .01$) | Significant |
| Mental Disengagement \leftarrow Regret | 0.545 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant |
| Complaining Behaviour \leftarrow Regret | 0.368 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant |
| Seek Social Support \leftarrow Regret | 0.396 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant |
| Positive Reinterpretation \leftarrow Regret | 0.428 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant |
| Repurchase Intention \leftarrow Seek Social Support | 0.311 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant |
| Repurchase Intention \leftarrow Positive Reinterpretation | 0.419 | *** ($p < .001$) | Significant |
| Repurchase Intention \leftarrow Regret | -0.156 | * ($p < .05$) | Negative effect |

| | | | |
|--|--------|-----------------|------------------|
| Repurchase Intention ← Dissatisfaction | -0.100 | Not Significant | No direct effect |
| Other paths (e.g., Anger → RI, MTD → RI) | ns | Not Significant | No direct effect |

Model fit indices indicate an acceptable to marginally acceptable model fit, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Model Fit Indices

| Fit Index | Value | Threshold | Interpretation |
|-----------|-------|------------------|-----------------------|
| CMIN/DF | 2.489 | < 5.00 | Acceptable |
| GFI | 0.745 | ≥ 0.70 (complex) | Acceptable |
| AGFI | 0.724 | ≥ 0.70 | Acceptable |
| CFI | 0.822 | ≥ 0.90 (ideal) | Marginally acceptable |
| TLI | 0.813 | ≥ 0.90 (ideal) | Marginally acceptable |
| RMSEA | 0.057 | ≤ 0.08 | Good fit |

These values fall within acceptable limits for moderately complex behavioral models involving multiple latent variables and mediating paths (Byrne, 2016; Hair et al., 2019).

4.3 Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

The standardized path coefficients are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Structural Path Coefficients

These findings confirm that coping strategies particularly seeking social support and positive reinterpretation play a significant mediating role between emotional reactions and repurchase intention.

4.4 Mediation and Serial Mediation Effects

To test mediation effects, bootstrapping (453 samples) was used with 95% confidence intervals. The results are summarized below:

Table 3: Mediation and Serial Mediation Results

| Pathway | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Mediation Type | Confidence Interval |
|--|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Dissatisfaction → Repurchase Intention | -0.100 | 0.053 | No mediation | [-0.003, 0.129] |
| Regret → Repurchase Intention | -0.156* | 0.351** | Partial mediation | [0.253, 0.479] |
| Dissatisfaction → Regret → PTR → RI | -0.037 | 0.021* | Full mediation | [0.001, 0.050] |

- PTR = Positive Reinterpretation
- RI = Repurchase Intention

The serial mediation path (Dissatisfaction → Regret → Positive Reinterpretation → Repurchase Intention) was significant, while the direct path from dissatisfaction to repurchase was not, confirming full mediation in this pathway.

4.5 Summary of Findings

- Dissatisfaction significantly triggers anger and regret, validating emotional reactivity in post-purchase contexts.
- Anger leads to complaining and social support strategies, but does not directly influence repurchase.
- Regret activates all four coping strategies, demonstrating its broader emotional influence.
- Seeking social support and positive reinterpretation are the strongest predictors of repurchase intention.
- Dissatisfaction does not directly reduce repurchase intention, but exerts an indirect influence via emotional and coping pathways.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the emotional and behavioral mechanisms that influence consumer decision-making after dissatisfaction in the skincare product domain. This section interprets the results in light of existing theories, elaborates on emotion-specific coping behaviors, explores the implications of the mediating pathways, and highlights cultural nuances observed in consumer responses.

5.1 Emotional Appraisal of Dissatisfaction

One of the key contributions of this research is the confirmation that consumer dissatisfaction evokes emotionally discrete responses, specifically anger and regret, each of which sets in motion distinct coping mechanisms. This supports the Appraisal Coping

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Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which posits that individuals evaluate stressful events emotionally and cognitively, leading to varied behavioral responses. The result that anger is significantly activated by dissatisfaction is aligned with prior research suggesting that consumers perceive dissatisfaction with external attribution such as blaming the brand or manufacturer leading to confrontive emotions (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005).

In contrast, regret emerged as the stronger emotional outcome, albeit with a lower path coefficient from dissatisfaction compared to anger. However, its downstream impact on coping and behavior was much more pronounced. This aligns with the notion that regret is a more introspective emotion, rooted in counterfactual thinking and internal attribution (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Particularly in personal care products like skincare, where consumer involvement is high and choices reflect self-identity, regret is a natural consequence of perceived failure.

5.2 Emotion-Specific Coping Strategies

The results reaffirm the hypothesis that coping strategies are emotion-contingent, not universal. Anger was associated with problem-focused strategies, notably complaining behavior and seeking social support. This supports earlier findings that anger prompts action-oriented responses, especially when consumers believe they have been wronged (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004; Duhachek, 2005). The use of social support as a coping outlet suggests that consumers seek validation and empathy from peers or online communities, especially in emotionally sensitive categories like skincare.

Regret, on the other hand, activated a broader range of strategies including mental disengagement, positive reinterpretation, and surprisingly, even problem-focused coping like complaining. This demonstrates the complexity of regret as a multifaceted emotional trigger, capable of driving both inward- and outward-facing coping behaviors. The strong positive path from regret to positive reinterpretation is particularly interesting, as it indicates that consumers attempt to restore emotional balance by reframing their negative experience (Ertz et al., 2022).

These results confirm the emotion-specific coping taxonomy proposed by Duhachek (2005), while also expanding it by showing that the same emotion (e.g., regret) can activate multiple strategies, depending on the consumer's psychological profile or the intensity of the experience.

5.3 Mediating Role of Coping Strategies

Perhaps the most significant insight from this study is the mediating role of coping strategies between emotional responses and repurchase intention. While dissatisfaction did not directly reduce repurchase intention, the emotions and coping mechanisms it triggered had a strong and significant influence. This suggests that consumer loyalty is not merely a function

of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but rather a product of how consumers manage their emotional discomfort.

In particular, the path from regret → positive reinterpretation → repurchase intention confirms a full mediation, showing that if consumers are able to emotionally reframe their dissatisfaction, they are likely to consider repurchasing the same product or brand. This aligns with research by Zeelenberg et al. (2010) and Nguyen and Nguyen (2024), who argue that emotional repair mechanisms can reduce dissonance and rebuild loyalty.

Similarly, seeking social support significantly enhanced repurchase intention. This supports the idea that communal coping, common in collectivist cultures like India, plays a restorative role in consumer-brand relationships. When peers validate one's choice or share similar dissatisfaction, it reduces the consumer's sense of isolation and disappointment, making them more open to brand re-engagement (Lyons et al., 1998; Wang & Chen, 2023).

5.4 Weak or Non-significant Paths

Interestingly, mental disengagement, often considered a protective coping mechanism, did not significantly influence repurchase intention. This could indicate that psychological withdrawal may provide short-term relief, but it does not foster long-term brand recovery or re-engagement. Brands that fail to emotionally re-engage consumers who disengage risk silent attrition (Walker, 2019).

Similarly, dissatisfaction alone did not significantly reduce repurchase intention, challenging conventional assumptions in EDT. This underscores the importance of examining mediated and moderated pathways, especially in emotionally rich product categories.

5.5 Cultural and Category-Specific Insights

This study further contributes to understanding how culture shapes coping responses. In the Indian context, communal coping especially seeking support from peers and digital communities plays a significant role. The collectivist orientation fosters shared emotional regulation, where consumers express dissatisfaction not only for resolution but also for emotional validation (Lin et al., 2023). This emphasizes the role of influencers, peer groups, and community-driven narratives in shaping brand perceptions and future purchase decisions.

The results are also contextually grounded in the skincare industry, a high-involvement, identity-relevant category. Emotional stakes are higher because product failure affects visible outcomes (e.g., acne, pigmentation). Therefore, the psychological need to rationalize failure or seek emotional repair is amplified. This distinguishes skincare from low-involvement categories and affirms the need for emotion-centered marketing frameworks.

6. Implications

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The present study contributes to both the theoretical advancement of consumer behavior literature and the practical strategies of skincare marketers. By revealing how discrete negative emotions activate coping strategies that mediate repurchase intention, this research reframes the post-dissatisfaction phase not as a loyalty break point, but as a psychological negotiation zone. This section outlines the key theoretical and managerial implications arising from the findings.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

6.1.1 Enriching Expectation–Disconfirmation Theory
Traditional models of post-purchase evaluation particularly Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) (Oliver, 1980) focus on cognitive dissonance without fully accounting for emotional reactions. This study advances EDT by demonstrating that dissatisfaction initiates an emotion–coping–behavior chain, wherein anger and regret function as affective intermediaries. As such, consumer behavior should be modeled not merely as a reaction to performance gaps, but as an emotionally regulated behavioral sequence (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Zeelenberg et al., 2010).

6.1.2 Expanding Appraisal Coping Theory in Consumer Contexts

This research validates and extends Appraisal Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) by empirically linking specific emotions to distinct coping strategies in a consumption setting. The evidence that anger prompts problem-focused coping and regret activates both emotion- and problem-focused strategies strengthens the application of this theory in marketing and consumer psychology (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). Moreover, by examining downstream outcomes such as repurchase intention, this study extends the theory beyond emotional regulation to behavioral consequences.

6.1.3 Positioning Coping as a Mediating Construct

Although previous studies have explored coping strategies as post-failure reactions, this research is among the few to empirically establish coping as a mediating variable linking emotional experience to future behavioral intent. This shifts the theoretical lens from a linear dissatisfaction → repurchase model to a multi-stage framework involving emotion → coping → behavior. It responds to recent calls in consumer psychology to incorporate affective-cognitive-behavioral linkages (Duhachek, 2005; Ertz et al., 2022).

6.1.4 Cultural Contextualization through Communal Coping

This study introduces and empirically supports the role of communal coping in the Indian skincare context, where peer validation and social sharing influence recovery and re-engagement decisions. It advances consumer behavior theory by integrating cultural psychology, showing that in collectivist societies, emotional processing is not entirely individual but shaped through social discourse and communal healing (Lyons et al., 1998; Wang & Chen, 2023).

6.2 Managerial Implications

6.2.1 Emotion-Centric Complaint Management

Brands must recognize that not all dissatisfied consumers behave the same. Those driven by anger expect responsive complaint resolution, while those experiencing regret need emotional reassurance and gentle reframing. Thus, firms should design emotion-specific redressal strategies:

- For anger: enable live chat, fast-tracked escalation, and apology-based responses.
- For regret: offer follow-up reassurance, trial alternatives, and compensatory framing.

Emotionally aware service teams can help prevent permanent churn and build brand trust (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024).

6.2.2 Leveraging Positive Reinterpretation

The strong influence of positive reinterpretation on repurchase intention suggests that brands can facilitate cognitive reframing through post-purchase messaging. Tactics include:

- Sharing user stories that normalize dissatisfaction.
- Offering usage tips that mitigate product errors.
- Reinforcing brand values (e.g., “We’re learning with you”) to reduce self-blame.

Such strategies help consumers emotionally resolve regret, making them more likely to give the brand another chance (Zeelenberg et al., 2007).

6.2.3 Empowering Communal Coping via Social Channels

The finding that seeking social support improves repurchase intention underscores the value of peer-based recovery ecosystems. Brands should:

- Create safe community forums for users to share concerns.
- Partner with influencers who can model adaptive emotional responses.
- Highlight consumer feedback in brand communications to amplify communal empathy.

This helps shift the consumer’s role from isolated victim to supported group member, increasing emotional resilience and brand loyalty (Lin et al., 2023).

6.2.4 Monitoring Coping Signals for Retention Strategy

Behavioral cues like frequent complaints, sudden disengagement, or search for social validation should be treated as coping signals. These indicators can feed into predictive CRM systems, prompting:

- Proactive outreach.
- Customized retention offers.
- Emotionally intelligent content deployment.

This approach aligns with affective computing in marketing, where emotional triggers are algorithmically integrated into customer lifecycle management (Wang et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the emotional and behavioral pathways that consumers engage in after experiencing dissatisfaction with skincare products, specifically focusing on the mediating role of coping strategies between negative emotions and repurchase intention. By anchoring the research in Appraisal Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and extending the scope of Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), the study bridges important theoretical gaps in the literature on post-purchase behavior.

The findings clearly demonstrate that consumer dissatisfaction does not operate in a vacuum. Rather, it evokes specific emotional responses anger and regret which, in turn, activate coping strategies that critically shape the likelihood of repurchasing. The results confirm that problem-focused coping (e.g., complaining, seeking social support) is more prevalent when anger is experienced, while emotion-focused coping (e.g., disengagement, reinterpretation) is more strongly associated with regret. Importantly, coping strategies such as positive reinterpretation and social support seeking were found to significantly enhance repurchase intention, suggesting that consumers often find ways to emotionally recover and re-engage with the brand.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the literature by (1) positioning coping as a central mediating construct, (2) validating emotion-specific behavioral patterns, and (3) contextualizing these dynamics in a culturally collectivist setting, where communal coping mechanisms are particularly influential. The study responds to recent scholarly calls to integrate emotion, culture, and behavior into post-consumption models, especially in high-involvement, identity-linked categories like skincare.

From a managerial perspective, the research provides actionable insights for emotionally intelligent brand engagement. By understanding how consumers cope with dissatisfaction, brands can design personalized recovery strategies, nurture consumer resilience, and reinforce loyalty even in the face of negative product experiences. Facilitating reinterpretation, supporting peer engagement, and offering transparent, empathetic redressal are not just customer service tactics they are emotional interventions that can rebuild trust and foster durable consumer relationships.

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges its limitations, including a narrow emotional scope, single-location sampling, and cross-sectional design. These provide fertile ground for future research to broaden the emotional spectrum, integrate longitudinal perspectives, and replicate findings across cultures and product categories.

In conclusion, this study affirms that how consumers cope matters as much as how they feel. In emotionally charged consumption domains like skincare, post-dissatisfaction behavior is neither impulsive nor uniform

it is a complex interplay of emotional processing, social dialogue, and psychological strategy. Understanding this interplay is essential for both academics seeking deeper behavioral models and marketers striving for lasting consumer engagement in a loyalty-fragmented marketplace.

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