

UX ANALYSIS

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Nykaa

Airtribe AI First Product Management Cohort, Assignment -1

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Methodology: Exploring Nykaa App · Feature Analysis · User Interviews

All research, observations, user interviews, and analysis in this assignment are my own. AI was used solely to assist with structuring and formatting the final document.

1. Problem Statement

Key Insight: Users visit Nykaa with specific buying intent rather than a desire to browse. However, the platform remains discovery-focused, creating a disconnect that leads to cognitive fatigue, ignored personalization data, and carts that ultimately serve as stagnant wishlists.

As India's premier e-commerce destination for beauty and wellness, Nykaa caters to a vast user base across diverse price points. While the platform possesses robust core elements such as a reliable product catalog and a loyalty rewards program. The actual user experience falters during the most critical phase: **guiding users with specific intent toward a confident buying decision.**

To examine this discrepancy, this report utilizes a three-pronged evaluation:

- A structured audit of the user journey.
- A deep-dive analysis of specific features.
- Qualitative interviews conducted with active users.

2. Methodology

This study used three complementary methods, designed to capture both functional issues and emotional pain points:

- Application Walkthrough — The app was evaluated step-by-step through a simulated purchase journey: **open** → **search** → **category explore** → **product view** → **add to cart** → **checkout**. Each stage was assessed against usability principles.
- Feature Analysis — Three specific features (SkinScan, AR Try-On, Homepage/Category flow) were isolated and evaluated on discoverability, effectiveness, and alignment with user intent.
- User Interviews — Two non-product, non-design users with real Nykaa purchase history were interviewed. Questions focused on motivations, pain points, and drop-off moments. Insights were synthesised into behaviour patterns rather than presented as isolated anecdotes.

3. User Journey Audit

The app was walked through as a first-time user with a specific goal: find and buy a skincare product. Each stage below captures what the user is trying to do and where the experience supports or undermines that goal.

Stage	User Goal	What Works	Friction / Gap
App Open	Get somewhere fast	Fast load, clean splash screen	The landing page is visually overwhelming. No clear focal point.

Stage	User Goal	What Works	Friction / Gap
Search	Find a specific product	Straightforward, accurate results	—
Category: Skin	Explore skincare options	SkinScan exists	The browsing sequence lacks logical flow, moving haphazardly from product listings and SkinScan to advertisements, brand suggestions, and finally skin type categories.
Product Page	Evaluate before buying	Reviews are accessible	Product details like usage and ingredients are presented as unformatted, raw text blocks, making them difficult for users to read and understand.
Add to Cart	Confirm purchase intent	No friction	—
Checkout	Complete the purchase	Smooth; multiple payment options	—

Key Observation: The transactional bookends (search, cart, checkout) are well-executed. The problem lives in the middle. Category navigation and the product evaluation stage — which is precisely where purchase decisions are made.

4. Feature Analysis

Three features were evaluated in depth. Each is assessed on what it is, what it actually delivers, and what it costs the business when it underperforms.

4.1 SkinScan

SkinScan	GOOD — BURIED
What it does	Scans the user's face via camera, generates a skin report, and recommends products mapped to identified skin issues.
What works	The feature delivers real value: it reduces decision anxiety by replacing guesswork with a personalized recommendation. For a first-time user, it is the clearest 'right next step' the app could offer.
What's broken	Discovery is almost accidental. SkinScan sits inside the Skin category. Invisible to users who navigate via Search or land directly on the homepage. Users with the highest need for guidance (new users, undecided buyers) are the least likely to find it.
Recommendations	This is a discoverability problem with a direct conversion cost. SkinScan reduces the core anxiety of beauty e-commerce (will this work for my skin?) but only for users who find it. Surfacing it on the homepage or as an onboarding nudge would immediately increase its reach with zero engineering cost.

Recommendations	SkinScan generates a skin profile but the app does not use that data to reorder what the user sees next. The signal is collected and then discarded. This is a wasted personalisation asset.
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4.2 Homepage & Category Navigation

Homepage / Category Flow	BROKEN ARCHITECTURE
What it does	The homepage and category pages serve as the primary discovery and navigation surfaces for the app.
What's broken	The Skin category scroll sequence; product types → SkinScan → ad for an unrelated brand → 'brands you'll love' → shop by skin type . It has no logical hierarchy. It mixes intent-based navigation, advertising, and personalisation without a coherent user goal in mind.
User cost	Users arriving with purchase intent are forced to parse an unrelated information stream before reaching what they came for. The result is the 'blackhole' effect described in user research: they came to buy, got overwhelmed, and left with a bigger wishlist.
Recommendations	This is an information architecture problem. The sequence of content blocks needs to reflect a user goal, not a mix of editorial, commercial, and feature content stacked without hierarchy. A post-SkinScan user should see their skin report and matched products first, not a Kay beauty ad.
Hick's Law	The more choices a user faces simultaneously, the longer they take to decide and the higher the risk of abandonment. Nykaa's homepage is a textbook case of violating this principle.

4.3 AR Try-On

AR Try-On	BAD — FALSE PROMISE
What it does	Allows users to virtually 'try on' lip colour using their phone camera before purchasing.
What's broken	The feature applies a flat colour swatch over the lips. It does not account for lip texture, shape, skin tone, lighting conditions, or product finish (matte vs gloss vs satin). The result looks artificial and bears little resemblance to how the product would actually appear.
User cost	Users who try the feature and find it unconvincing lose trust in a tool that should have built it. Worse than no AR is AR that actively undermines confidence because now the user has 'tried' the product and still has no answer.
Recommendations	The core unresolved problem in beauty e-commerce is that users cannot test products before buying. AR was positioned as the solution but this implementation doesn't solve the problem; it reframes it. Until real-time skin tone mapping, texture rendering, and lighting correction are incorporated, the AR feature creates more confusion than confidence. The short-term fix is to remove it.

5. User Research Synthesis

Two users were interviewed: one a five-year Nykaa customer who has purchased across categories, and one a more recent user who primarily buys colour cosmetics. Rather than presenting their responses separately, insights are synthesised below into observable patterns.

Pattern	Evidence	PM Implication
Users arrive with intent, not curiosity	Both users came knowing what to buy. Neither was browsing.	App is optimised for discovery. Misaligned with actual behaviour. Priority should be decision support, not exploration.
Clutter causes abandonment, not indecision	User 1: 'Went in to buy, got overwhelmed, left with a bigger wishlist.'	This is revenue leakage. Reducing cognitive load on the homepage directly impacts conversion.
Trust built by history & reviews, not ads	High ad density signals 'avoid this product'. Reviews and past orders drive decisions.	Ad-heavy homepage undermines Nykaa's own trust-building. Lean into purchase history and community reviews.
Shade accuracy is unresolved	Color appears different on screen vs real life. AR doesn't solve it.	This is a category-wide problem.

Most Telling Quote: "I went in to buy something specific. I saw too many options. I got overwhelmed. I left. My wishlist keeps growing. I keep saying next time."

This quote encapsulates the central tension: a user with clear intent, met by an experience designed for exploration. The wishlist is not a sign of engagement it is a graveyard of abandoned purchase decisions.

6. Prioritised Recommendations

Recommendations are evaluated on user impact, business impact, and engineering effort. Priority follows an Impact vs. Effort framework.

Problem	User Impact	Business Impact	Effort	Priority	Rationale
SkinScan discoverability	High, unseen by most users	High, reduces drop-off, boosts conversion	Low, surface existing feature	P0 ●	Quick win; existing tech, zero build cost
Homepage Information Architecture & clutter	High, direct cause of abandonment	High, revenue leakage from drop-off	Medium, Information Architecture redesign.	P1 ●	Root cause of the 'blackhole' effect

Problem	User Impact	Business Impact	Effort	Priority	Rationale
Post-SkinScan personalisation	High, signal collected but ignored	High, wasted engagement data	Medium - High	P1 ●	Makes the whole SkinScan investment pay off
Shade accuracy (online vs real) Too many shades displayed together causes decision fatigue and confusion.	High, users can't meaningfully compare shades when 10+ are crammed side by side	High, paralysis leads to drop-off; wrong shade purchases lead to returns	Low-Medium, shade comparison selector (pick up to 3, compare side by side)	P1 ●	Simple interaction fix with direct impact on conversion and return rate
Product page ingredient formatting	Medium, affects considered buyers	Medium, reduces returns, builds trust	Low, formatting only	P2 ●	Low effort, targets ingredient-savvy users
AR Try-On quality	Medium, low trust in current form	Medium, false confidence lead to returns	High, tech dependency	P3 ●	Needs real skin-tone mapping; current AR hurts more than helps

P0 — Surface SkinScan on the Homepage

- Add a prominent SkinScan entry point on the homepage, not buried in a sub-category.
- Frame it as a first-time user action: 'Not sure where to start? Scan your skin.' This directly addresses the decision anxiety that causes drop-off.
- Estimated impact: higher engagement from new users; reduced bounce from the category page.

P1 — Rebuild the Homepage and Category Information Architecture

- Replace the current unordered scroll with a goal-oriented hierarchy: **What are you looking for** → **Best match for your profile** → **Discovery content**.
- If the user has completed SkinScan, the Skin category page should lead with 'Recommended for your skin, not generic product type lists.
- Compress ad placements; do not interleave commercial content with navigational content.

P1 — Activate the SkinScan Personalisation Signal

- The skin profile generated by SkinScan should feed into product rankings across the app, not just the Skin category.
- When a user adds a product to cart, surface SkinScan-based compatibility nudges: 'Good for your skin type' or 'You may want to check ingredients for your oily skin.'
- This turns a one-time feature interaction into a persistent personalisation layer.

P1 — Shade Selection & Comparison for Colour Cosmetics

- When browsing lipsticks, blushes, or eyeshadows, users should be able to select up to 3 shades and view them in a dedicated side-by-side comparison panel rather than scanning a row of 10+ swatches crammed together.
- This turns a paralysing choice into a guided decision, reducing both drop-off at the shade selection step and post-purchase returns from wrong shade picks.

P2 — Reformat Product Page Ingredient & Usage Information

- Replace wall-of-text ingredient lists with structured, scannable formats: key actives highlighted, usage steps numbered, ingredient glossary tooltips for first-time users.
- This is a low engineering effort and directly addresses the growing segment of ingredient-aware beauty buyers.

P3 — AR Improvement or Remove the Feature

- Shade accuracy (online vs. real life) is an industry-wide unsolved problem. No short fix exists.
- Interim: improve product photography standards, require multiple lighting conditions, and show community photos from verified buyers.
- AR improvement requires skin-tone mapping and texture rendering technology.

7. Conclusion

Nykaa has built a genuinely strong product foundation: trusted catalogue, loyalty mechanics, community content, and now AI-driven tools like SkinScan. The opportunity is not to build new features, it is to make the existing ones visible, coherent, and connected.

The single most impactful shift Nykaa can make is architectural: reorganise the experience around the user's actual journey (I know what I want, help me confirm it) rather than the business's preferred journey (browse more, discover more). When a user with intent is met with clarity instead of clutter, they do not drop off. They buy.

The One-Sentence Fix: Stop designing for the user who doesn't know what they want, start serving the user who almost does.