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OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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KEY ANTECEDENTS OF FEMALE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COSMETICS PRODUCT

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ABSTRACT

The basic purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the determinants of female consumer buying behavior with special reference to cosmetics products. A shopping mall administration survey was conducted to collect primary data. An exploratory factor analysis was run to identify key determinants of the female consumer buying behaviour. Various statistical tests like Chi-square, Regression and ANOVA were conducted to test the stated hypothesis. Results of the study indicate that utilitarian/functional benefits, perceived brand value and perceived credibility of communication play a significant role in shaping the female consumer buying behavior among both the age group under study. The study found a significant relationship between marital status and spending on cosmetics. The study suffers from three major limitations of small sample size, requirement of a cross cultural analysis and use of multivariate data analysis techniques like SEM for estimating relationships among variables simultaneously. The paper is an empirical document that can be used to frame creative marketing strategies and suggest various antecedents to marketers, policy-makers and all those who are looking to enhance customer value and satisfaction and making their offering more convenient, better and economic.

KEYWORDS

Consumer buying behavior, Factor analysis, Perceived brand value, Utilitarian benefits.

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, every individual likes to look more beautiful and physically attractive. A beautiful and attractive human being always gets good admirations and recognition in the society. It is the attractive and good human faces that get preference over the unattractive ones. This particular personality trait has been used by marketers to promote their products. Various psychological studies have also found a positive relationship between the attractiveness and the behavioral dimensions of that individual. We hardly find any culture throughout the world that does not appreciate the attractive human faces and body in various ways

When we look at the evolution and acceptance of various cosmetics products in its present form, its origin and history spans over thousand of years. The cosmetics were in use in various civilizations of the earth and almost every society and culture has used cosmetics in one or other ways. Khraim (2011) observed that cosmetics, as they are known, originated in the Far-East first. It was used in different ways i.e. tattooing and body scarification in America, use of colors and sketches by Africans. Gradually it has been modified into numerous ways in the form that we include in cosmetics today.

According to the definition of Food and Drug Adulteration department of USA, cosmetics refers to any product- intended to be applied to the human body for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or altering the appearance without affecting the body's structure or functions. Nair and Pillai (2007) defined cosmetics as articles intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled or sprayed on introduced into or otherwise applied to the human body or any part thereof, for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or altering the appearance or various articles intended for use as a component of such articles. The cosmetics products are mainly used for making skin, eyes, lips, hair and nail more soft, younger, attractive and beautiful.

Getting a fair look and physical attractiveness is undoubtedly one of the inherent desires of most of the human being today. However, female community happens to be more cautious and concern to improve and modify their grooming, personality, physical appearance and attractiveness. As a result this community constitutes the most attractive and sizeable market for various cosmetics products like fairness cream, gel, anti aging/wrinkle free cream, nail paint, lipstick and certain other variety of products.

The desire to get good feel and look is growing with the growth of materialism culture throughout the world. Consumers, especially the females are becoming more beauty conscious. They are ready to pay a premium over various cosmetics products that they feel will satisfy their need more effectively. However, the consumer behavior patterns in this regard, vary markedly, according to demographic and socio-cultural background of the segment under study. Several other factors like cultural transformation, changing lifestyle, growing media penetration and desire to become financially independent have been considered significant in shaping consumer buying behavior across the world.

In the backdrop of above discussion, this paper is an attempt to identify, analyze and empirically test various factors, that influence the consumer buying behavior so that marketers can offer and redesign their marketing strategies to enhance customer value by improving customer satisfaction and integrating all the benefits consumer look in the brand they patronage.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify various factors that determine female buying behavior with respect to cosmetics products
- To analyze relationship among socio-demographic variables and cosmetics purchase behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION OF STUDY

A significant per cent of the spending on the beauty and other cosmetics products is attributed by female consumers worldwide. India is not an exception to this fact. Nair et al (2007) projected the sales of cosmetics product in India in 2010 at INR 195.6 billion. However, in comparison to other markets of the world, it is still at a nascent stage. Shukla et al (2009) estimated that per capita spending on cosmetics products in India is as low as INR 30, which is INR 1500 in major Asian countries.

Guthrie et al (2008) conducted a similar study in USA with special reference to female consumer's perception of a brand in relation to their facial image and cosmetic usage. The study observed a significant relationship between a women's facial image and her perception towards a brand. Malhotra (2003) attributed growing fashion and beauty consciousness, growing focus on health and fitness along with rising disposable income as the reason for witnessing a good growth rate in times to come.

In this background, marketers are coming out with more innovative and creative marketing strategies to deal with growing needs and aspirations of the female consumers who are perceived to be tough buyer than their male counterpart. As a result Indian market is experiencing different kinds of applied marketing strategies like product launch and re-launch, re-positioning of the products, modifications through changes in the ingredients, improvement in the quality, brand extension, multiple price points and by revamping the traditional distribution system that makes them more competitive to deliver customer value.

Practically, it has always been a challenge for the marketers to understand the consumer buying behavior from acquisition to disposing off the products. It is especially true in case of Indian female consumers who are perceived to be highly price sensitive. Voss et al (2003) observed that price play an important role in shaping the consumer behavior of the people in early stages of the buying behavior. The complexity of the consumer buying behavior gets more complicated

markedly by socio-economic class, purchasing power and certain other demographic factors. Sinha (2003) observed that Indian consumers, especially female lay more emphasis on entertainment value rather than functional benefits of the product.

Ibanz et al (2011) found that the benefits sought after in the purchase of cosmetics in general as well as in deciding on a specific cosmetic brand are not limited to instrumental or functional benefits but may also be related to hedonistic or emotional consumer buying behaviour. Marketers use social-comparison theories to influence the buying behavior in which celebrities and models are being used in promotional campaigns.

Most of the literature which is available on this subject has focused only on one or two dimensions of the consumer behavior. However, Indian consumers have their own characteristics which have little resemblance to Western consumers in terms of buying behavior. As a result, various theories and models which have been developed in Europe and America has little relevance in Indian market. This research study intends to overcome all these limitations by identifying, analyzing and testing different constructs that encompass various facets of female consumer buying behavior with special reference to cosmetics products in developing country like India. It also tests relationships among various demographic and socio-cultural factors and their impact on shaping buying behavior in this regard.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a cross sectional descriptive research design which was carried out in two distinct phases. In first phase, a content analysis study was performed primarily to become familiar with various dimensions of the cosmetics industry and consumer behavior in this regard. A sample of 20 respondents, consisting of beauty consultants, cosmetics retail shop-keepers, female customers and brand executives of leading cosmetics brands was taken. This phase helped in developing a precise and formal research instrument in the form of a structured questionnaire to collect primary data for the second phase of the study.

In the second phase, a shopping mall administration survey was carried out over 120 female customers who were making an exit from the respective shopping mall. The questionnaire was designed into two major parts. Part a consisted of questions on demographic and other relevant socio-cultural factors. Part two of the questionnaire dealt with questions that determine the consumer buying behavior including 27 different constructs.

H1 A customer's age and her spending on cosmetics has no significant relationship.

H2 A customer's marital status and her spending on cosmetics has no significant relationship.

H3 A customer's attitude towards a cosmetics brand is independent of utilitarian/functional, perceived brand value, perceived credibility of communication, packaging and location/physical evidence benefits.

DATA INTERPRETATION

One hundred seventeen questionnaires were found usable. The respondents were divided into two major age categories of below and above 28 years. In Indian social system, by this particular age, females usually get married and witness a significant change in cosmetics product buying behavior.

About 60 per cent respondents were below 28 years of age. Out of it, 64 per cent were married and 36 per cent were unmarried. The educational profile revealed that almost 51 per cent respondent were graduate/ post-graduate, 34 per cent have earned professional degree. Only 9 per cent respondents reported their educational qualification below high school.

The housewife constituted the largest occupational category with almost 39 per cent respondents. It was followed by salaried class and self-employed professionals with 27 per cent and 23 per cent contribution in occupational cohort of the respondents. Only 4 per cent respondents were into their own business in the form of entrepreneurs/ traders.

TABLE 1: SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Variables	Characteristics	N	Percent
Age	Below 28	69	60
	Above 29	48	40
Marital Status	Married	75	64
	Unmarried	42	36
Education	Up to Senior Second.	11	9
	Graduation/Post Grad. Grad.	59	51
	Professionals i.e. CA,B-Tech,LLB etc.;	40	34
	Others	7	6
Monthly household income(MHI)	Below 50,000	34	29
	50,001-100,000	54	46
	100,001-200,000	24	21
	Above-200,001	5	4
Profession	Salary employed	31	27
	Own business	5	4
	Self-Employed Prof.	27	23
	Housewife	46	39
	Other	8	7

The Average Monthly Family Income (AMFI) data revealed that 46 per cent respondents belonged to INR 50,001 to 100,000. Only 4 per cent respondents were reportedly earning more than INR 2 00,000.

The data analysis further revealed that almost half of the respondents spend less than INR 250 per month on purchase of various cosmetics products. Only 27 per cent respondents spend between INR. 251-500 and a little less than 10 per cent spend more than INR 1001 per month on purchase of various cosmetics products. The results of the Chi-square test (at 5 per cent level of significance) substantiates significant relationship between respondent's age and their spending on cosmetics as calculated chi-square value at 0.05 per cent alpha level and 3 d.f. were found statistically significant.

TABLE 2: CHI-SQUARE TEST ON AGE & SPENDING ON COSMETICS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.63	3	.037

The study found a positive relationship between the marital status and respondent's spending on cosmetics as the alpha value is statistically significant therefore, reject the H3.

TABLE 3: CHI-SQUARE TESTS ON MARITAL STATUS & SPENDING ON COSMETICS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.511	3	.001

The data analysis regarding shop preference revealed some surprising results. Almost 62 per cent respondents always preferred to purchase cosmetics products from a certain specific shop. Around 52 per cent respondents preferred their family members to accompany them while going to purchase cosmetics products. About 27 per cent respondents preferred their friends and only 21 per cent preferred no one to accompany them while going to purchase cosmetics products. In 53 per cent cases, friends played a critical role in influencing the purchase decision of the respondents. It was followed by spouse with 21 per cent cases. The children were reportedly played little role in affecting the purchase decision of the respondents.

Promotional campaign on television and other electronic media was considered as the preferred source of information by 44 per cent respondents. Word of Mouth communication was found to be another important source of information. Only 4 per cent respondents reportedly used internet to search information related with the purchase of cosmetics products.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The goodness of the data is measured to test the consistency of the constructs taken to analyze the customer's psychology on use of various cosmetics products. Consistency indicates the degree to which a set of constructs collectively measures what it intends to measure. The reliability of each construct was first measured with Cronbach's alpha. It is computed in terms of the average inter-correlations among the items measuring the concept. A construct is considered reliable if the value of alpha ranges from 0.5-0.95 (Peterson, 1994). The results confirms the suitability and validity of the data as the alpha value ranges between the acceptable limits and thus indicate the goodness of the items in the survey.

TABLE 4: VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF FACTORS

Factors	Items	Croanbach's Alpha
Utilitarian/ Functional benefits	I always look at the ingredients/composition of the products	.841
	Prefer to purchase products made-up of natural/ herbal ingredients	
	I prefer to purchase a product that offer more color choice	
	I purchase a brand that keep my skin soft and glowing	
	A good cosmetics brand has more life	
	I prefer a product that give me good scent and fragrance	
Perceived Packaging Benefits	I prefer a trendy and fashionable packaging	.701
	Good products always come with creative and innovative packaging	
	Packaging offering play a critical role in my decision making	
Perceived Brand value	I am attracted towards a specific brand	.792
	I am ready to pay a premium for my brand	
	A good cosmetics brand is in congruence with my image	
	Good brand provides more variety and choice	
	Good cosmetics brands offer better results	
	A good cosmetic brand offer good value for money	
	A good cosmetics brand has certain distinctive features	
	Using a good brand improves my social interaction	
Perceived Credibility of Communication	Advt. influence my decision to purchase a product	.753
	Creative and innovative advt. induce trial purchase	
	I enjoy looking window display while visiting in the market	
	WoM communication are more reliable than other methods	
	I always look for sales promotion schemes before I purchase cosmetics products	
Location Physical evidence benefits	Location of shop influence my purchase decision	.713
	Nature of shop influence my purchase decision	
	I get attracted towards well designed cosmetics retail shop	
	A good cosmetic shop must have attractive scent and fragrance all around	
	I prefer to visit a shop which have female beauty consultants	
	I prefer to visit that shop where staff is trained and well behaved	

RESULT OF FACTOR ANALYSIS

A factor analysis, which was confirmatory in nature, was performed on the different variables which have been developed to understand the consumer psychology behind purchase of cosmetics products. These factors are: utilitarian/functional benefits, perceived brand value, perceived credibility of communication, physical evidence and packaging benefits. The factor analysis was conducted using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation as an extraction method. Only those factors have been selected whose eigen values are greater than 1.0. The result of the factor analysis using low value deletion procedure has been presented in the table below.

TABLE 5: FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factors	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
I always look at the ingredients/composition of the products	.887				
Prefer to purchase products made-up of natural/ herbal ingredients	.861				
I prefer to purchase a product that offer more color choice	.803				
I purchase a brand that keep my skin soft and glowing	.782				
A good cosmetics brand has more life	.754				
I prefer a product that give me good scent and fragrance	.746				
I prefer a trendy and fashionable packaging				.652	
Good products always come with creative and innovative packaging				.644	
Packaging offering play a critical role in my decision making				.548	
I am attracted towards a specific brand		.788			
I am ready to pay a premium for my brand		.759			
A good cosmetics brand is in congruence with my image		.715			
Good brand provides more variety and choice		.742			
Good cosmetics brands offer better results		.736			
A good cosmetic brand offer good value for money		.767			
A good cosmetics brand has certain distinctive features		.698			
A good cosmetics brand has certain distinctive features		.763			
Using a good brand improves my social interaction		.659			
Advt. influence my decision to purchase a product			.712		
Creative and innovative advt. induce trial purchase			.730		
I enjoy looking window display while visiting in the market			.658		
WoM communication are more reliable than other methods			.741		
I always look for sales promotion schemes before I purchase cosmetics products			.754		
Location of shop influence my purchase decision					.601
Nature of shop influence my purchase decision					.524
I get attracted towards well designed cosmetics retail shop					.587
A good cosmetic shop offers attractive aura all around					.543
I prefer to visit a shop which have female beauty consultants					.602
I prefer to visit a shop where staff is trained and well behaved					.537

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations

These variables within factors are correlated, is confirmed by the Bartlett's test of sphericity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy indicated a practical level of common variance (KMO = 0.643), which implies that the results obtained from factor analysis are appropriate. The factors identified are given in table 5, exhibits 59.66 percent of the variance of the variables. The first factor, utilitarian/functional benefit, consists of six variables (alpha = 0.841). Peterson (1994) points that acceptable value of Cronbach's alpha can vary between 0.5 and 0.95 depending on the type of research. For basic research Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0.6. The second factor, packaging benefits, was loaded with three variables (alpha = 0.701). The third factor, perceived brand value, contained the maximum eight variables (alpha = 0.782). The fourth factor, perceived credibility of communication was loaded for five variables (alpha = 0.753). The fifth variable was loaded over six variables (alpha = 0.713). The overall reliability of the factor developed to understand the buying behaviour was 0.740.

RESULT OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The appropriateness of the factor analysis results was verified by conducting regression analysis and ANOVA. For this purpose, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction for their favorite cosmetic brand on a scale of 1-5. It was treated as dependent variable and its relationship was established with various factor items which have been treated as independent variables by conducting these tests. The preliminary descriptive analysis of the data produced 0.832 as value of standard error. However, the actual value of standard deviation of the dependent variable was found 2.01. Therefore, the proposed model was appropriate for conduct of ANOVA.

TABLE 6: REGRESSION MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.511 ^a	.401	.384	.832

a. Predictors: (Constant), Utilitarian/Functional benefits, Packaging benefits, Brand equity benefits, Communication benefits, Location & physical evidence

TABLE 7: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	38.98	5	9.35	10.214	.000 ^a
Residual	84.02	95	.798		
Total	122.990	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Utilitarian/Functional benefits, Packaging benefits, Brand equity benefits, Communication benefits, Location & physical evidence

b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction level of favorite cosmetics brand on a scale of 1-5

TABLE 8: STANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENT STATISTICS

Model	Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	2.19	.756	2.69	2.66	0.05
Utilitarian/Functional benefits	.232	1.01	.435	5.211	.002
Packaging benefits	.621	1.31	.119	1.787	.048
Brand equity benefits	.186	1.11	.329	2.534	.013
Communication benefits	.141	1.29	.228	1.64	.022
Location & physical evidence	.034	1.36	-.185	-.235	0.63

The model explains approximately 40 per cent of the total variance in respondent's satisfaction level towards brand of cosmetics they use (as the value of R square is 0.401). According to the standardized regression coefficients, the relative order of preference of the predictive factors over the satisfaction level towards cosmetics brand can be summarized as follows: Utilitarian/Functional benefits(B=0.435), Perceived Brand value benefits(B=0.329), Perceived Credibility of Communication benefits(B=0.228), Perceived Packaging benefits(B=.0.119) and Location and physical evidence(B=-.185). The t – test result, pertaining to the significance of regression coefficient observed that except location and physical evidence ($p > 0.05$), all other factors are statistically significant. As a result, the H3 is rejected and proved that respondent's attitude towards cosmetics brand is significantly affected by utilitarian/functional benefits, perceived brand value, perceived credibility of communication and perceived packaging benefits of the brand that they use.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The research study provides a deep insight in decoding and understanding one of the most complex processes of female consumer buying behavior especially for the class of products which is targeted to the worldwide. The study found that utilitarian/functional benefits, perceived brand value and perceived credibility of communication significantly determine the female consumer buying behavior of the people. The study found the value of perceived packaging benefits of the brand, statistically less significant in comparison to previous three. The value of location and physical evidence was found statistically insignificant. The results obtained from the research study are found similar to such other studies which have used certain common variables to understand consumer buying behavior in this regard (Burn et al,2006, Ibanez et al,2011).

From a managerial standpoint, the study postulates that marketing managers are required to redesign their marketing mix to enhance customer satisfaction by focusing on utilitarian/functional benefits, perceived brand value and credibility of marketing communication. They are required to modify their offering that evoke a feeling of improved appearance and look in the mind of consumers which is attributed to the use of a particular brand that they use for this purpose.

The study suffers from three major limitations. First limitation is the sample size which is less in view of the size of universe and sample size used in similar other studies. Secondly, there are perceived cultural influences in the consumer behavior of such products. Therefore, it provides a scope for a cross cultural analysis. Finally, multivariate data analysis techniques like Structural Equation Modeling provides more rigorous tool for estimating relationships among a number of independent variables simultaneously.

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