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ANALYSIS OF THE PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR ON SKIN CARE PRODUCTS AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATION

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ABSTRACT

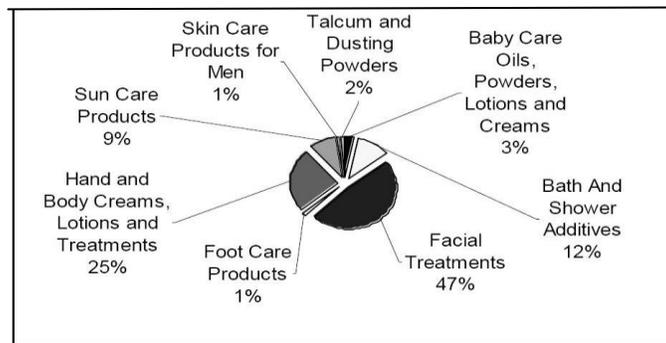
The purpose of this study is to analyse the purchasing behaviour of the younger generation on skin care products. A total of 200 respondents took part in this survey. From the analysis, it was found that Environmental Concerns was ranked the highest among the six variables chosen for the study. The other remaining variables are price, packaging, promotion, branding and self Image.

Keywords: Skin care products, consumer behaviour, purchasing behaviour, image, marketing, life style

INTRODUCTION

Facial skin care product is a personal usage (Rence, 2004). Consumers have many different attribute beliefs toward a product or a service. These bundles of beliefs form one's attitude toward that product or service. Marketers need to figure out the buying pattern of external and internal factor which affect customers intention to purchase. It is important to comprehend the buying habit of consumer due to changing technology and uncertain future perception and caused the buying pattern of consumer become fickle with every generation (Rence, 2004). Up till now, facial skin care has played a hand in Malaysia market. Malaysia's consumer lifestyle has been changing due in part to give a rising in affluence and education levels. In order to shape the consumer buying behaviour, the high profile international retailers and the global mass media have also take a role on it. Malaysians are becoming more westernized, sophisticated and cosmopolitan. Sales of skin care products are designed to moisturize, cleans, tone, and otherwise maintain the skin. Eight products are included in this category as depicted in Figure I.

Figure I: Sales of skin care product 2002



Source: http://www.greyhouse.com/pdf/rcos_pgs.pdf

The potential of youth market has gain an insight of the marketers in today's' market. Consumers are now more aware of what they are wearing on their bodies, and they are willing to pay for products which enhance appearances and keep them looking young and fit (Nair 2007). 20 year olds now use anti-aging products (Mouthong et. al. 2008). Consumers do really care about the type of product applied on their face or skin to beautify themselves. In the craze of skin care industry, marketers need to be alert with any opportunity to buzz the market. Marketers have long coveted the youth market for its buying power,

influence on family spending, and willingness to try new products and brands. This show the younger generation are a force to be reckoned with. Hence the purpose of the study is to analyse the purchasing behaviour of skin care products among the younger generation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The skin care in Asia has growing rapidly in recent years. The main aim of any cosmetic product is, to modify the appearance and/or correct body odour, and/or protect or keep the different outer surfaces of the human body in good condition (Cuadrado 2007). Six out of ten Hong Kong people have a low self-esteem on their facial skin qualities (MVA Hong Kong Limited, 2010). People are starting at a younger age and spending more on facial skin care products and facial treatment services. In Thailand, whitening skin care lotion has been very popular in Thailand for the past few years. In 2003, it commanded 60 percent of the total skin care product market. The leading brand in this sub-sector includes Nivea, Ponds, and Oil of Olay. Skin repair lotion and cream commanded approximately 20 percent (Estee Lauder, Clinique, Lancome, Eucedrin, Oil of Olay); facial oil reduction lotion and cream commanded 5 percent (Johnson and Johnson, Ponds, Oil of Olay), and general skin care and moisturizer commanded 15 percent such as Johnson and Johnson, Baby Mild, Nivea, Ponds, Vaseline, Citra, Care (Mouthong et. al. 2008).

Skin care is defined as the maintenance of the hygienic state of the skin under optimal conditions of cleanliness and comfort. Effective in skin care are proper washing, bathing, cleansing, and the use of soaps, detergents, oils. Face is the reflection of an individual's physical appearance. Generally, the beauty of a person is described by the look of one's face. The industry manufactures products like astringent, face cream, face scrub, face toner, moisturizer, cleanser, etc. Some of these products are used for clarification and purification of the facial skin from dust and harmful rays of the sun while others are used for toning. There is no guarantee of skin beauty retention, but a regular face skin care program is essential for a youthful maintenance. Purchasing decision of consumer sometime is unpredictable. Based on some studies, consumers can be very selective in what they are choosing, which makes consumer-orientation vital for firms in order to gain a so-called "share-of-mouth" (Kotler and Keller, 2006; Van Trijp and Meulenberg, 1996). According to Duncan, (2005), consumer motive is defined as "internal impulses that when simulated initiate some type of response." Consumer motive is one of internal impulses to fulfill their wants and needs. The marketing mix which applies by most companies no doubt is one of the elopements to meet consumer motive. Consumer motives will be affected by price, place, promotion and product (Peter and Donnelly, 2007). Several authors have agreed that the traditional marketing mix has been defined as a set of controllable instrument to manage the controllable and dynamic marketing environmental and consists of four major (P⁴): price, product, promotion and place (Stanton et. al.(991); McCarthy and Perreault 1993).

One vital proposition in research is that the choice objective and the nature of consumption situation are critical because they influence all phases of perceived risk processing through decision making (Aqueveque 2006). People normally purchase facial skin care according to their needs. Since the body skin has a slightly different cellular structure than the skin care product, a facial skin product is essential to cleanse the dirt and grime off easily while at the same time rejuvenate skin cells so that the healthy glow will show. Batra and Kazmi (2004) "asserts the broader stages of a consumer's decision making process that includes problem identification (feeling need of a new car), information search (on internet and showrooms), evaluation of alternatives (comparing brands, for instance' on basis of repute and features), outlet selection and purchase (purchasing selected item) and post-purchase action (satisfaction or dissonance)". As for facial skin care product, the factors that influence the buyer would include: beliefs in product attribute, environmental concern, demographic and personal characteristic which induce the consumer to purchase the facial skin care product. Lower prices do not really affect the purchasing decision. Evidence shows some consumer even failed to recall the purchase prices (Dickson and Sawyer 1990). Most people understand the basic premise of supply and demand, and realize the impact these factors have on prices (Bolton et. al. 2003). However, according to Bobinski *et al.* (1996), consumers tend to purchase products during the discount period. It was reported that over 60 percent of US department store volume is sold at "sales" period. In general, lowering the price is a common method used by many companies. Majority of consumer respond to lower price and quality improvement and also design and packaging of container. Consumers responded to lower price, improve quality and sophisticated container design (Lee, 1993; Lee, 1998; Kim, 2001).

Packaging and design of skin care product plays an important role to grasp the customer's attention. Just as important as the package's language, appeals could lead consumer to make an aesthetic-based decision which is a vital step in targeting personal care goods to male consumers (Schaefer, 2007). Product with good design and packaging can be attractive and allure consumer make unplanned decision. Consumers not only respond to lower price and improve quality but also to sophisticated container design (Lee, 1993; Lee, 1998; Kim, 2001). Packaging design has an influence in consumers buying decision process. People tend to like aesthetics.

Sales Promotion is defined as .marketing activities usually specific to a time period, place or customer group, which encourages a direct response from consumer or marketing intermediaries, through the offers of additional benefits (Peattie and Peattie 1994). Sampling is one of the promotion methods that are used often by companies. Samples are a good way to test market response. McGuinness et. al. (1995) considers product sampling as a sales promotion technique used by marketers to encourage "consumer trial". The main purpose is to increase product sales by providing incentives to consumer directly. Kim (1998) insisted that discount stores were the popular place consumer considers visiting. Berger and Mitchell (1989) found that indirect experiences, such as advertising, are just as influential as direct experiences in changing the accessibility of attitudes. Advertising arouses consumers' buying decision, influencing them to buy on impulse (Kollat and Willett, 1969). However, according to Rotfield (1999), advertisement fails to persuade consumers to make an initial purchase decision. Hawkins et al. (1998) indicated using "emotions" in advertisement has gained consumers' attention. Advertisement acts as a language to convey or expose information to public. Using celebrities is another form of advertising. Celebrities are able create awareness and good image of their own in the minds of the consumer (Seno and Lukas 2007). It enhances brand recognition of products and services. Celebrity endorsement can be described as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCracken 1989).

Branding is one of the strong elements to influence the consumer's purchase intention. A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) aimed to identify the goods or services, and to differentiate those goods or services from other competitors (Ghodeswar 2008). Brand runs very high in facial products. In general, brand figures out "how and who we are" (Seabrook, 1999). Trust is a feeling of security held by customers that the brand will meet their expectation (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2005). Brand acts as a promise of future (Deighton 1992), which can increase the image of the company and also repurchase intentions. About 33% of women switched skin care brands during the past 12 months. They have a high level of curiosity and they wish to try something new (Household and Personal Products Industry, 2007). However, according to Engel et.al (1982), brand loyalty has great influence over the purchase intention. Brand identity is an important factor when making a purchase decision. For the last few decades, concerns about environmental degradation have been increasing (Chan and Lam, 2002; Laroche et al., 2001). Environmental concern refers to an affective attribute that can represent a person's worries, compassion, likes and dislikes about the environment (Yeung, 2005). As consumers have been recognizing the importance of protecting the environment, environmentalism has become a major issue in the marketplace (Brown, 1996; Kalafatis et al., 1999). Consumers are willing to pay higher price to purchase a products/ services that purport environmental friendly. Alston and Prince Roberts (1999) found, in their research on environmental strategy and new product development, that there was a willingness to pay slightly more for environmental improvement in cleaning products than to sacrifice product performance. Self image can be an element which can enhance the confidence level of an individual. People try to become the being they desire to be by consuming the items that they imagine will help to create and sustain their idea of themselves, their image, their identity (Bocock, 1993). Some people believe self-image leads to success. The concept of being a beautiful is identified as the key to success (Irons 2001; Peiss, 1993). Self image build up self-confidence and self esteem. People tend to make a purchase when they believe it will improve their appearance. The consumption of products has been identified as the contributing factors to the creation and attainment of desired self-image, identity and self- concept (Featherstone, 1993; Firat, 1993; Kellner, 1992; Mort, 1988; Schouten, 1991; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

A total of 200 respondents have been randomly identified to participate in this survey. Data for this study is collected by means of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be personally administered and collected. The independent variables to be tested would be the price, packaging, promotion, branding, environmental concerns and self-image. The purpose of the study is to determine which factors influence the buying behaviour of the consumer.

DISCUSSION

Respondents were asked to rank which variable was more important to them. 60 respondents (30%) ranked Environmental Concerns as the top variable when it comes to purchasing skin care products (Table I). The findings indicate that consumers do really care about the type of product applied on their face or skin to beautify themselves. There were reports of carcinogenic chemical found in many cosmetic products -- including more than half of all baby soaps (Whitney 2007). Internal studies in the cosmetics industry show that many of their products can be contaminated by a carcinogenic impurity called 1,4-dioxane, and the EWG's independent study showed that 1,4-dioxane is fairly widespread among cosmetic products. Consumers are concerned with their skin as once it has been contaminated the results will be a disaster for them.

Table I: Variable Ranking

	Ranking	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Price	5	20	10
Packaging	4	30	15
Promotion	3	35	17.5
Branding	2	40	20
Environmental concerns	1	60	30
Self Image	6	15	7.5
Total		200	100

(Ranking: 1 = Highest 5 = Lowest)

In terms of the correlation analysis, it was found that Environmental Concerns had the highest correlation value ($r = 0.887$) and since the p value is less than 0.05, this relationship is significant as seen in Table II. As consumers have been recognizing the importance of protecting the environment, environmentalism has become a major issue in the marketplace (Brown, 1996; Kalafatis et al., 1999). Consumers are willing to pay higher price to purchase a products/ services that purport environmental friendly. Branding was found to have a correlation value of 0.627. Brand acts as a promise of future (Deighton 1992), which can increase the image of the company and also repurchase intentions. Brands are also link with the activities of the companies. As such, if their products do not meet the safety regulation, consumers may not want to risk their skin. Promotion was found to have an r value of 0.595. Sales Promotion is defined as .marketing activities usually specific to a time period, place or customer group, which encourages a direct response from consumer or marketing intermediaries, through the offers of additional benefits (Peattie and Peattie 1994). From the average value, consumers are not really influenced by it. As for Packaging, the r value was found to be 0.485. Packaging and design of skin care product plays an important role to grasp the customer's attention. Just as important as the package's language, appeals could lead consumer to make an aesthetic-based decision which is a vital step in targeting personal care goods to male consumers (Schaefer, 2007). Price has a correlation value of $r = 0.431$. Lower prices do not really affect the purchasing decision. The findings agrees with the suggestion that consumer sometimes fail to recall the purchase prices (Dickson and Sawyer 1990). Self Image was found to have the lowest correlation value of $r = 0.353$. Self image build up self-confidence and self esteem. From the findings, it was found that consumers do care for it.

Table II: Factors influencing purchasing behavior

		Skin care purchase	Relationship /Significant
Price	Pearson Correlation	.431**	Positive
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	Yes
Packaging	Pearson Correlation	.485**	Positive
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	Yes
Promotion	Pearson Correlation	.595*	Positive
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.009	Yes
Branding	Pearson Correlation	.627**	Positive
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	Yes
Environmental concerns	Pearson Correlation	.887**	Positive
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	Yes
Self Image	Pearson Correlation	.353**	Positive
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	Yes

(* significant at 0.05 level, ** significant at 0.1 level)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The potential of youth market has gain an insight of the marketers in today's market. Consumers are now more aware of what they are wearing on their bodies, and they are willing to pay for products which enhance appearances and keep them looking young and fit (Nair 2007). From the analysis, it was found that Environmental Concerns was ranked the highest among the six variables chosen for the study. The other remaining variables are Price, Packaging, Promotion, Branding and Self Image. People do care for whatever will be applied to their skins. Skin cancers threats as a result of carcinogenic materials used for the preparation do affect the consumer's intention and decision to purchase the skin care product. After all, to most people, the face is the fortune. If the face is disfigured, it will be for life. No one would want this situation to happen to them. For future research, it would provide a better insight if more variables would be tested. Other variables that can be considered includes: company trends and company image. Besides that, it would be an interesting finding to be able to compare the different purchasing behaviour of people of various age groups. The older and younger generation thinks differently and would rank certain variables differently. An analysis to examine this would be beneficial and also important not only from the academic point of view but also the commercial sector.

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