
The Influence of Promotional Mix on Female Consumers' Buying Behaviour

Goh Mei Ling¹, Elaine Ang Hwee Chin², Tan Seng Huat¹, Tay Tiam Poh³

¹Faculty of Business, Multimedia University, Malaysia

² Faculty of Applied Communication, Multimedia University, Malaysia

³Roman Plantation Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia

Corresponding Email address: mlgoh@mmu.edu.my

Abstract - The skin care industry has become very competitive today. The demand for skin care products has grown rapidly due to the growth in the population of working females and the penetration of Korean culture among Malaysians. Hence, this study aims to investigate the influence of promotional mix on buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products. This study has recruited 200 female respondents from Melaka using convenience sampling. The data was collected using a set of self-administered questionnaires. Advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling and public relations were included in the research model to predict buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products. Data analysis which involves measurement model and structural model were performed using PLS-SEM. Sales promotion and public relation both influence buying behaviour significantly. Advertising, direct selling and personal selling, however, were found to be non-significant. The findings have thus implied that sales promotion and public relation are important factors of buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products. This study has provided valuable information and insightful input to the marketers of skin care products.

Keywords - *Buying Behaviour; Female Consumer; Promotional Mix; Skin Care Products*

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I. Introduction

The consumers' demand towards cosmetics is increasing rapidly. Cosmetic industry has become one of the fast-growing industries worldwide. This is because today people are very concerned about self-image and self-consciousness. There are more and more new brands of cosmetics being developed and entering into the cosmetic

market. Among the examples of the globally well-established leading cosmetic companies include The L’Oreal Group, The Procter & Gamble Company, Unilever, Shiseido Company, and etc. Skin care has contributed to the largest sectors in this industry in Malaysia (Globaldata, 2020).

According to Allied Market Research (2020), the Malaysian skin care market was at \$804.5 million in 2019 and is expected to reach \$1.28 billion by 2027. This has shown that the market of skin care products will expand in the near future. The market of skin care products is becoming very competitive as there are many brands available. The marketers need to have a more effective marketing strategy to market their products and attract more consumers. Understanding the buying behaviour of consumers is important as it will help marketers in their marketing strategy plans development in order to sustain in the market (Noor’ain et al., 2018). This will thus help to increase their market share which will accelerate their profits eventually. Shallu and Gupta (2013) highlighted that promotional mix is one of the effective strategies that marketer can develop to attract more customers and influence their buying behaviour for maximizing their sales and gain more profit. Previous studies have shown that promotional mix has impacted the consumer buying behaviour (Vidhya & Ramesh, 2017).

In Malaysia, the population of working females has increased from 5.7 million in 2018 to 5.92 million in the first quarter of 2021 (Department of Statistics, 2019; 2021). Women has thus become more financially independent and have their own purchase decisions. Allied Market Research (2020) have reported that female customers dominate more than half of the market share in the skin care products in Malaysia (Allied Market Research, 2020) and expected to retain in the near future. Moreover, the penetration of Korean culture among Malaysians has also caused the rapid growth in the skin care products industry. Thus, this study aims to understand how the promotional mix, namely advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling and public relation influence the buying behaviour of female consumers towards the skin care products.

II. Literature Review

Buying Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the communication and interaction in the process of exchanges between customers with marketers (Peter & Olson, 2010). Solomon, Bennett and Previte. (2013) defined it as the process of a consumer to satisfy his or her need and wants by selecting and purchasing ways to use the products, services, ideas and the experiences that are available in the market. The same definition was also given by Jeddi et al. (2013) that consumer behaviour is the process of consumer selecting and purchasing ways to use the products and services that are influenced by his or her mental, physical and emotional state which can fulfill and maximize his or her needs and desires.

Tyagi, Tyagi & Pandey (2014) highlighted that consumer behaviour relates to a consumer acquiring, evaluating, using and disposing the product and services in their decision-making process of physical activities. According to Anjana (2018), attitude has an impact on the consumer during his or her purchasing activities and use of the products. Bhatt and Sankhla (2017) pointed out that the purchasing process of the consumer towards product and service is influenced by the attitude, preferences, intentions and decision.

Lakshmi et al. (2017) in their study on the impact of gender on consumer buying behaviour have discussed that female and male consumers have different sets of characteristics. According to them, women consumers are much more sensitive, warm and apprehensive as compared to men. Meanwhile, a study by Siddiqui (2016) revealed that women consumers are more internally focused in which they are more subjective and intuitive. Thus, these have shown that women do have an impact on buying behaviour towards the goods and services.

Advertising

Advertising is one of the elements in the promotion mix. Advertising is defined as an identified sponsor doing some kind of impersonal presentation to promote the product, service and ideas (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Celebrities, athletes, and actresses are also a way of advertising that marketers use to attract the consumers that are the followers of these famous people (Alhedhaif, Lele & Kaifi, 2016). Fatimah and Lodhi (2015) in their study have found that advertising is able to create the awareness of consumers towards cosmetic products. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2011), advertising is not only limited to a promotional tool in delivering the messages of the products to consumers rapidly, but also reaching a large population of consumers in different geographical areas at low cost. Advertising is effective in building a long-lasting good image in the consumers’ mind that may boost the sales of the products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011).

In this competitive market environment, advertising has become a very important strategy that can influence the buying behaviour of consumers. Companies are also willing to spend more budgets in running advertisements to promote their products. Advertising enables sellers to share and deliver the information of the products in a form of communication with consumers. Baheti, Jain & Jain (2012) have shown that advertising is the most

important promotional strategy that has become the key issue that affects the consumer buying behaviour in the market. Advertising will also help consumers to compare different brands of products and gain more information about them (Kumar & Raju, 2013).

In the study of Kokoi (2011), it has been shown that younger women focus more on the image of packaging, creativity, colour, and attraction of advertisement. Women are also focused on the ecological and ethical aspects of the product that showed in the advertisement (Kokoi, 2011). Ampofo (2014) and Alhedhaif et al. (2016) have proven that advertising has the power to influence the buying behaviour of consumers towards cosmetic products. Vidhya and Ramesh (2017) in their study have also revealed that advertising has a strong influence on consumer buying behaviour towards natural cosmetic products.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is a short-term incentive that attracts more people to purchase the particular product or service which includes coupons, contests, discounts, and demonstrations that can encourage people to purchase (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Its effect is considered short term as compared to advertising and public relations which focus on building long term relationships with customers to gain the long-term benefits (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Chakraborty et al. (2013) have found that sales promotion has more power of influence on the consumer buying behaviour than advertisement in their study.

According to Ashraf et al. (2014), different kinds of sales promotion provided by marketers such as free samples, discounted price, and social and physical surroundings are able to influence consumer buying behaviour (Ashraf et al., 2014). Study by Kokoi (2011) revealed that old women will be more willing to purchase facial skin products if there is a promotion of buy 1 free 1 or free product with purchase of the facial skin product. Similar finding was shown by Shamsi and Asif (2018) that buy 1 free 1 promotion has an impact on the buying behaviour of consumers.

Ampofo (2014) has found that discounted price is the most effective strategy to affect the buying behaviour of consumers. Study by Santini et al. (2015) that involved 662 students also showed that students are more focused on the discount price offered during their purchase. Findings in the study by Nagadeepa and Tamilselvi (2015) also proved that discount and rebate are more significant to the consumer buying behaviour. Neha and Manoj (2013) have also found that premium and contest as examples of sales promotion tools have a strong impact on the consumer buying decision (Neha & Manoj, 2013). In sum, the sales promotion like price discount and buy 1 free 1 have significant influence on consumer buying behaviour towards the products and services.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing refers to direct communication with specific consumers by individuals that can gain immediate response and build long lasting relationships which includes direct mail, catalogues, online marketing, telephone marketing, and others. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Direct mail is the most common direct marketing promotional tool and has been used for many decades. Marketers use the direct mail to promote a product or service by providing the information to the consumers. Some other direct marketing tools include telemarketing and direct selling. Direct marketing helps marketers to communicate with the consumers easily which will enable marketers to get a quick response from consumers.

Nowadays, with the advancement in telecommunication such as the internet, marketers can communicate with consumers easily via social media. Subramanian (2017) highlighted that the development of electronic media and the mobile technologies have allowed companies to be more cost effective in serving the customers. This has also enabled the marketers to have immediate interaction with consumers and promote their products easily where companies can provide more information about their products, help consumers to solve problems that they faced towards the product and provide the most suitable plan for the consumers (Zeenat, 2012). Hasman et al. (2020) found that consumers are more likely to purchase if there is perceived trust and affective attitude on the social media advertisement of the health and beauty products. Thus, direct marketing has become a key strategy for the companies to establish personal and strong relationships with the customers (Abraham & Joseph, 2016).

Direct marketing has also gained its popularity among companies to keep the consumers and increase sales by creating direct contacts with them and fulfilling their needs and requests (Karaxha, Tolaj & Abazi, 2016). Mitrana and Budaciaa (2017) found that female consumers are in favour of the online promotional messages, which inspires them to purchase the products in their interest. From the consumers' point of view, direct marketing brings convenience as it saves the consumers' time since consumers can directly know the information of the products and fulfil their desires towards the products (Zeenat, 2012).

Personal Selling

At certain phases of the purchasing cycle, personal selling is the most efficient strategy, especially in

constructing the preferences, beliefs and behaviour of consumers. It includes personal communication between two or more individuals so that each individual can satisfy the requirements and features and be able to make adjustments for them. Personal selling can also emerge from the customer relationship and transform the matter-of-fact selling relationship to the friendship between salesperson and customer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011).

Personal selling is a good strategy that can build connections between salespeople and consumers. Sales people can understand better about the needs and wants of consumers and think of ways to fulfill them and attract them to make purchases. Through personal selling, consumers will have the chance to ask the question that they are concerned about to the salesperson and seek the solution for the problem (Jerpi, 2019). They can also communicate with salespeople to get more information by face-to-face contact with salespeople (Mahmod, Ibrahim & Yousif, 2010). The immediate responses of communication between salesperson and customer will allow the needs and wants of the customer to be satisfied effectively (Ashley et al., 2011).

According to Yousif (2016), the direct communication and contact will also strengthen the relationship between customer and salesperson which will in turn affect consumers' purchase decision and thus the buying behaviour. The good relationship will be able to create a good brand image of customers towards the organisation as well as its products (Yousif, 2016). Adewale, Adeniran and Oluyinka (2019) in their study have shown that the strong relationship between salesperson and customer will impact on buying behaviour of consumers and thus increase the sales volume of the organisation. Similar finding also revealed by Oladipo (2019) that personal selling has a significant influence on consumers' impulse buying behaviour.

Public Relations

Public relations are also one of the promotional mixes which promote products with high credibility which include the attractive stories, functions, sponsorships for events, and some activities that are actual and credible to the reader than advertisement. It can attain customers that are not willing to communicate with salespeople or without any notices of advertisement. Public relations are a way that marketers can deliver the message to consumers as news that could be more acceptable to consumers. It can be very effective, efficient and economical to use a well-thought-out public relations campaign with other promotional tools (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011).

The marketing public relations play an important role in the impact of consumer buying behaviour. Anugrah (2014) noted that credibility, likability, and trust are the words that describe the benefits of marketing public relations and it will be more effective if they are used together with other promotional tools. Mulia (2019) has found that public relations has a moderate effect on consumer purchasing decisions. Hence, it is believed that there will be a higher impact if it is combined with other promotional tools.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were established.

H1: Advertising has positive impact on buying behaviour of female consumer towards skin care products

H2: Sales Promotion has positive impact on buying behaviour of female consumer towards skin care products

H3: Direct marketing has positive impact on buying behaviour of female consumer towards skin care products

H4: Personal selling has positive impact on buying behaviour of female consumer towards skin care products

H5: Public relations has positive impact on buying behaviour of female consumer towards skin care products

III. Methodology

In this study, 200 female respondents from Melaka were recruited using convenience sampling. The study was conducted in Melaka because the statistics have shown that the population of women in Melaka has increased to 454,400 in 2017 from 422,000 in 2013 (World Data Atlas, 2020). Survey was conducted for the data collection from December 2019 to January 2020, using a set of self-administered questionnaires which consists of respondents' profiles and all the variables in the model. The measurements of the variables in this study, namely advertising (5 items), sales promotion (6 items), direct marketing (5 items), personal selling (6 items), public relations (5 items) and buying behaviour (5 items) were adapted from previous studies (Ampofo, 2014; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Bishnoi & Sharma, 2009; Khraim 2011; Kokoi, 2011; Koshy & Manohar, 2015; Reis, 2015; Shallu & Gupta, 2013; Shamout, 2016; Yousif, 2016; Zeenat, 2012) as they were validated and tested. All the independent variables were measured using the 5-point Likert scale, which 1 represent strongly disagree and 5 represent strongly agree. Meanwhile, buying behaviour was measured using a 7-point Likert scale with 1 represent strongly agree and 7 represent strongly disagree. This is to minimize the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Tehseen, Ramayah & Sajilan, 2017). Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The validity of the constructs was done in the measurement model and the impact of the five independent variables on the buying behaviour of the female consumers was done in the structural model.

IV. Findings

In our study, 47% of the respondents were in the age grouped of 25 and 34. It then followed by 43.5% from the age grouped of 18 to 24. In terms of the amount of money spent on skin care products in a year, 34.5% of the respondents has the spending expenditure between RM1000 and RM3000, 34% in between RM501 and RM1000. There was only 12.5% spent more than RM3000 per year to buy the skin care products. About 28% of the respondents has their purchase between 2 to 5 times per year. It then followed by 28% who purchased more than 10 times and 24% purchased 5 to 10 times per year.

Convergent validity was assessed via factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The cut-off point for the factor loadings is 0.5 (Byrne, 2016), composite reliability is 0.7 and average variance extracted of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017). The factor loadings obtained for the study is 0.583 to 0.824, CR is between 0.833 and 0.894 and AVE is 0.5 to 0.628 as presented in Table 1. There is only one item, PS6, that was deleted due to low factor loading. This indicates that the convergent validity for all the variables is satisfactory.

The discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015) to compare the HTMT values obtained with the threshold value of HTMT_{.85} (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). All the HTMT values for the study as shown in Table 2 are less than HTMT_{.85} meaning that the discriminant validity is deemed to be adequate.

Structural model was performed using bootstrapping procedure with a resample of 5000 as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). The results for the structural model are presented in Table 3. The *t*-value for sales promotion is greater than critical value of 1.6449 ($\alpha = 0.05$) and public relation is greater than critical value of 2.3263 ($\alpha = 0.01$). This shows that sales promotion ($\beta = 0.204$) and public relation ($\beta = 0.463$) are significant. Meanwhile advertising ($\beta = 0.097$), direct marketing ($\beta = 0.02$) and personal selling ($\beta = 0.114$) are found to be non-significant. Hence, H2 and H5 are supported while H1, H3 and H4 are not supported. The R^2 is 0.454 which implies that 45.4% of total variation of purchase intention of female customers is explained by the model. R^2 value of 0.454 is considered as moderate according to Chin (1998).

The significant variable which is sales promotion, has a small effect size of 0.051 and public relation has a moderate effect size of 0.305 (Cohen, 1988). Blindfolding procedure was performed to check on the model's predictive relevance. The Q^2 of 0.194 indicates that the model has adequate predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017). All the VIF are less than 5 which shows that the multicollinearity problem does not exist among all the independent variables as suggested by Hair et al. (2017).

V. Discussion

This study has shown that advertising has no significant influence on the female consumer buying behaviour towards skin care products. The result is not consistent compared to previous studies that revealed there is significant influence of advertising on buying behaviour (Alhedhaif, 2016; Vidhya & Ramesh, 2017). This implies that the buying behaviour of the female respondents in this study is not affected by the advertising. This is possible because their purchase of the skin care products addressed the concern that nothing is more important than their beauty care and image.

Sales promotion was found to have a positive impact on buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products in this study. This is in line with the findings of Nagadeepa and Tamilselvi (2015) in which discount and rebate to the product will attract the consumer to make a purchase. Sales promotion tools such as vouchers and price discounts are the factors that are considered by female consumers in their purchase. Ashraf et al. (2014) also showed that free samples, discounted price, and social and physical surroundings can influence the purchase of the consumers towards the products. This has thus confirmed that sales promotion is a predictor of buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products.

This study has provided evidence that direct marketing is not affecting the buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products. This result contradicts the findings by Abraham and Joseph (2016). In this study, it reveals that the female consumers do not perceive direct interaction such as direct mail and information provided from the skin care products companies as an important factor to influence their purchase. This has thus proven that direct marketing is not a determinant to female consumers in purchasing skin care products.

Personal selling was revealed to have no significant effect on buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products in this study. This result does not correlate to the previous studies by Adewale et al. (2019) and Oladipo (2019) where they have shown that there is a strong relationship between salesperson and customer. Personal selling which is more on face-to-face contact of the salesperson with the consumers do not play an important role in influencing the female buyers. This could be due to the fact that more female consumers are

making their purchase via online platforms resulting from the rise of online business in the economy. Bhaskara et al. (2018) in their study on online buying behaviour of females found that ease of use and convenience have attracted female consumers to purchase online. This has thus demonstrated that personal selling does not explain buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products.

The result of this study has confirmed that public relations has positively related to buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products. This result is similar to the study of Mulia (2019) and Anugrah (2014). Female consumers' buying behaviour in this study are mainly influenced by the public relations in the form of public sources such as reviews by others and social media. Public relations has the strongest impact on buying behaviour of female consumers in this study as compared to sales promotion, indicating that public relations play a vital role in affecting female consumer buying behaviour.

Table 1: Measurement Model

Construct	Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Advertising	A1	0.771	0.833	0.5
	A2	0.712		
	A3	0.697		
	A4	0.643		
	A5	0.707		
Buying Behaviour	CBB1	0.716	0.839	0.512
	CBB2	0.679		
	CBB3	0.779		
	CBB4	0.76		
	CBB5	0.636		
Direct Marketing	DM1	0.824	0.894	0.628
	DM2	0.786		
	DM3	0.791		
	DM4	0.783		
	DM5	0.778		
Public Relations	PR1	0.798	0.836	0.509
	PR2	0.776		
	PR3	0.62		
	PR4	0.592		
	PR5	0.757		
Personal Selling	PS1	0.712	0.849	0.533
	PS2	0.818		
	PS3	0.742		
	PS4	0.583		
	PS5	0.772		
Sales Promotion	SP1	0.761	0.867	0.52
	SP2	0.697		
	SP3	0.726		
	SP4	0.722		
	SP5	0.679		
	SP6	0.739		

Table 2: Discriminant Validity Using HTMT Criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Advertising						
2. Buying Behaviour	0.396					
3. Direct Marketing	0.518	0.322				
4. Personal Selling	0.305	0.464	0.254			
5. Public Relation	0.293	0.804	0.286	0.465		
6. Sales Promotion	0.489	0.589	0.501	0.374	0.498	

Table 3: Results for the Structural Model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	Decision	R2	Q2	f2	VIF
H1	Advertising -> Buying Behaviour	0.097	0.094	1.034	Not Supported	0.454	0.194	0.013	1.307
H2	Sales Promotion -> Buying Behaviour	0.204	0.094	2.161*	Supported			0.051	1.48
H3	Direct Marketing -> Buying Behaviour	0.02	0.077	0.262	Not Supported			0.001	1.346
H4	Personal Selling -> Buying Behaviour	0.114	0.082	1.384	Not Supported			0.02	1.198
H5	Public Relations -> Buying Behaviour	0.463	0.16	2.893**	Supported			0.305	1.287

Note: * p -value < 0.05, ** p -value < 0.01

VI. Conclusion

The findings of this study have confirmed that sales promotion and public relation are important factors of buying behaviour of female consumers towards skin care products. Thus, this study has suggested the marketers of skin care products to focus more on sales promotion and public relations in the marketing strategy plan. It should be emphasized that the skin care industry is highly competitive nowadays due to many brands available in the market. Understanding the impact of promotional mix on buying behaviour especially female consumers will definitely provide valuable information to the marketers in planning the proper and effective strategies. This will help them to combat with the competitors and secure a better market share in the skin care industry by creating a better awareness of the consumers. This study also provides an insight into the buying behaviour of the female consumers towards skin care products in Malaysia context.

The limitations of this study are mainly on the diversity of the background of the respondents. Majority of them are below the age of 35. Secondly, this study only involved the female consumers from Melaka. It may lead to the issues of generalisation and representativeness to the entire population. Recruitment of respondents from other age groups as well as the other states are recommended in the future research. It is also recommended to examine the effects of more specific variables such as specific promotional tools or advertising methods on female consumers buying behaviour towards the skin care products in the future research.

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