

Physical appearance
is positively related to
self-esteem level



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A number of existing researches have confirmed that physical appearance is positively related to self-esteem level. Self-esteem exists in all mankind. Human beings tend to evaluate and examine themselves, and if they find that they are lacking of something in their physical appearance they are more likely to take measures to self create something that will make them feel satisfied and attain a complete self (Schouten, 1991) and they do it by consuming various products (Schouten, 1991; Solomon, 2009; Cash & Walker Cash, 1982).

As mentioned if one feels his or her appearance is lacking of something, they would turn to adornments that would make them look good. Some believe that wearing beautiful adornments will also enhance their physical appearance because the adornment is beautiful. Adornments could include fashion apparels, cosmetics, jewelleryes and in this research, I will be looking into a single adornment, mascara. How one seeks to beautify his or herself through the usage of adornments will be further discussed in Chapter two.

Mascara can perform beauty miracles, it serves as an enhancer to one's appearance, making their eyes appear bigger and doll-like by thickening, lengthening and curling their eyelashes. Mascara now comes in many different colors and is available with tube and wand applicators whereas its brushes comes in either straight, or curved, with fine or thick bristles. Some of the common ingredients we can find in today mascara include water, preservatives, wax thickeners and film-formers.

Asian typically has sparse and shorter eyelashes comparing to our Indian and Caucasian counterparts. Hence, in order to achieve the socially desire big

eyes with long, thick, voluminous eyelashes, ladies would either turn to mascara or fake lashes. However, fake lashes require a little more skills to apply and it is more time consuming than mascara. Even though its popularity has risen because it is use by many famous artist and makeup artist on models featured in magazines and television. It is also costlier in the long run as compared to mascara. Mascara is still widely used today.

Mascara has a history of as far as around 4000 B. C. it was originated from ancient Egyptians to ward off evil spirits and ill-wishers by masking the eyes. The first mascara was created by Egyptians using a substance called Kohl, mixed with crocodile stool, honey and water to prevent running. It was applied using bone and ivory. However it was until the Victorian era the promotion of cosmetics rose as women then spent majority of their day occupied with their beauty regimes. Victorian women who want to lengthen and darken their eyelashes made their mascara in the comfort of their dressing room by heating up a mixture of ash and elderberry juice. But their homemade concoction of mascara was never marketed.

And finally, mascara was commercialized only in the nineteenth century by a man named T. L. Williams. He created the first modern mascara in 1913 for his sister Mabel by blending coal dust with petroleum jelly. He later started a mail order business which eventually grew into a reputable company Maybelline, they are now a leading cosmetic company in America.

1. 2 Research Purpose

There are an abundance of studies available concerning self-esteem level and the usage of cosmetics and adornments in general. In fact, in the studies

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of ... it was said that people with low self-esteem have a higher tendency to seek adornments to enhance their physical appearance thus increasing their self-esteem level. Yet on the contrary, ... argued that adornments are more important to people who are attractive with high self-esteem as these people are more concerned of their physical appearance. There are no studies at the moment focusing on proving if one's self-esteem level affects the consumption of a single adornment. Therefore, this research will be looking at how and if individual self-esteem level of the women in Singapore affects the consumptions of mascara and usage in terms of ownerships, amount spent, amount owned, purchase frequency, application frequency and touchup frequency. And finally, this research seeks to understand if low self-esteem female possess more mascara, spend more on mascara, applies more mascara as compared to the average and high self-esteem female or vice versa. And conclude with a difference between low, average and high self-esteem Singaporean female on the reliance of mascara to enhance their physical appearance.

1. 3 Research Scope

In order meet the research objectives find out if the individual female's self-esteem level affects their consumptions of mascara, 120 self-administrated questionnaires was distributed. Data collected was tested for its normality, reliability, using Histogram, Cronbach's alpha, and other statistical instruments such as Cross-tabulations, Pearson's r correlation coefficient and finally regression.

1. 4 Dissertation structure

Following after this chapter would be literature review in chapter two, the motivations to consume adornments will be further discussed in this chapter. Next up is chapter three methodology, this part of the paper explains how the research was carried out, its' process and the instruments used. Results and analysis in chapter four explains the findings and lastly conclusion, recommendations and limitations of this study is discussed in chapter five.

Chapter two

Literature Review

2. 1 Motivations to consume adornments

2. 1. 1 Self-Esteem

According to Jones 1973, “ Self-esteem position assumes that the individual has a need to enhance his self-evaluation and to increase, maintain, or confirm his feelings of personal satisfaction, worth and effectiveness”. As mentioned in the previous chapter, self-esteem exists in all mankind. To what extend do our very own self-esteem easily fluctuated by the external influences? In the course of everyday life, we often receive evaluations and even nasty criticism from others such as friends, family members or strangers. And these evaluations may refer to a person’s performance, physical appearance, their competency, social skills or any quality. Some people may react more strongly to these evaluations than do others.

In fact, “ The importance of perceived competence and perceived physical attractiveness consistently emerged as predictors of stability of self-esteem”, as shown in the studies done by (Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry,&

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Harlow, 1993), the greater the importance is placed on competence and physical attractiveness as determinants of a person's self-worth, the greater the degree of unstable self-esteem. And in Rosenberg's (1965, p. 370) research he found that, " the lower a person's self-esteem, the more he was bothered by the poor opinion of another person".

As mentioned in previous chapter, a number of empirical supports have confirmed that physical attractiveness is positively related to individual self-esteem level and the receipts of positive responses from others (Adams, 1977; Adams & Read, 1983; Cann, Siegfried & Pearce, 1981; Goldman & Lewis, 1977). This has led to people consuming adornments such as cosmetic, slimming pills to enhance their physical appearance or to conceal their physical flaws such as thunder thighs and to conform to what the society deem as beautiful, for example; big dreamy eyes, rosy cheeks, pink or red lips and many more.

People with lower self-esteem has been said that, they are more likely to engage in direct forms of self-enhancement (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988) and are more deprived of positive self-feelings; they react more favourably to positive feedback and unfavourably to negative feedback as compared to the high self-esteem people. In addition, Self-esteem level varies across individual. Hence, in this research I seek to understand if individual self-esteem's level, high or low; can influence the consumptions of adornments. And I had specifically zoomed in to single adornment which is " mascara".

2. 1. 2 Appearance management

Appearance management plays a huge role in impression formation. Many people engage in appearance management because it decides whether he or she will leave a positive or negative impression in others. It involves behaviors like exercising, cosmetic use, dieting (Lennon et al., 1999) and many more. Everyone has their exclusive approach to managing their appearance so as to increase their confidence, self-esteem and leaving behind a good impression. For instance, women who are not as satisfied with their body will choose clothing to conceal the body, whereas those who are more satisfied with their body will choose clothing to accentuate their own body (Harden, Butler, & Scheetz, 1998). And when a women “ feel fat,” she will use apparels for camouflage; when they “ feel slim” they will also use apparel to express their individuality, to increase their confidence, and to look fashionable (Kwon & Parham, 1994).

However, to some people, it may not be the negative body image that motivates appearance managements. Recent researches have indicated that the use of cosmetics is higher among women with positive facial image (Guthrie, Kim & Jung, 2008).

Not only (Guthrie, Kim & Jung, 2008) article has suggested that the use of cosmetics is higher among women with positive facial image, (Brown, Cash, & Noles, 1986; Theberge & Kernaleguen, 1979) has also postulated that cosmetics have an expressive function and thus are more important for those who are attractive, on the contrary, some author argued otherwise.

Zaltman and Wallendorf (1983) and Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982/

Mahvelous) indicated that inherently attractive individuals will use fewer
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adornments. Moreover, Cash (1982/ Mahvelous) have also found negative correlations between body satisfaction and cosmetic use.

In summary, additional empirical investigations look desirable in trying to resolve these researchers' contradicting findings. It will help determine if there is a direct connection between adornments use and innate attractiveness.

2. 1. 3 Actual and Ideal Self

With the aid of the advance technology in Singapore, we are often exposed to plentiful images of what society deems as beautiful women in magazines, television advertisements and internets, the images eventually become the ideal self one wants to achieve, driving us to want to look like them. Thus, it has led some people to experience certain amount of discrepancy between their actual self and ideal self. Ideal self is how one would like to be (Solomon, 2009) and the ideal self is usually shaped by cultural and social norms. Real self is the realistic qualities one has or not has.

The discrepancy that people faced is the gap between their actual and ideal self. The ideal self motivates one to manage their appearance through cosmetics use such as mascara, clothes or even plastic surgery. According to Solomon (2009), the smaller the gap between the ideal and the actual image of the body the more positive one will feel about the appearance. In another words, a greater gap between the actual and ideal selves can signify negative feelings about one's physical appearance.

The tendency to fill up the gap of actual self and ideal self is then high. “

When one's body is disliked because of the deviation from norms of
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functions or appearance, replicated evidence shows that anxiety, insecurities and low self-esteem are regular correlates (Sarah Scott/ Jourard, 1964).” And when there’s a need to fulfill; for instance, improved confidence, motivations takes place; driving people to certain actions and behavior (Solomon, 2009) such as purchasing adornments to minimize the gap of their real and ideal self. Hence, an abundance of research has proved that how a person looks at him or herself highly affects his or her consumptions of products.

Most psychological research on body image focuses on women because it is assumed that they face greater pressures than men to be a particular size and shape (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). Such research adopts a causal model in which cultural standards of beauty define unrealistic body shapes as “ ideal.” Consequently, women become dissatisfied with less than ideal bodies and adopt (more or less) harmful practices to modify their bodies (Frith & Gleeson, 2004).

2. 1. 4 Symbolic self-completion behaviour

Consumers do not purely consume products only to satisfy their needs, but also to complete what they feel they are lacking of. People with an incomplete self-concept try to define themselves by using symbols. Symbols can range from a word frequently used, a product that represent themselves, a gesture or certain behaviour. For instance, a person who wants to look good on every feature of her face, or to doll up for certain function tends to polish up their make-up by applying mascara to complete their look.

However, to certain people, they might feel that their eyelashes are probably too short, sparse or looks like it’s barely there, applying mascara can

become a daily routine and owning a mascara can be a necessity to these people.

2. 1. 5 Feminine identity

Applying cosmetic is seen as a quick fix to improve one's appearance and thus, improving confidence (Miller & Cox, 1982). Hence, using cosmetics provide an instant boost of femininity.

Numerous studies have shown that makeup use by women is associated with stronger attributions of attractiveness and femininity (Cash, 1988; Cash & Cash, 1982; Cash, Rissi & Chapman, 1985; Cox & Glick, 1986; Graham & Jouhar, 1981; Hoult, 1954; Hamid, 1972).

Using the different colors and products available in the market, women use it to portray their individuality and engage in specific appearances practices to distinguish day looks, night looks, basic looks and looks for special occasions (Beausoleil, 1992) Makeup also gives the benefit in assisting to create varying roles or identity play for consumers. For instance, day versus night self, work versus fun self, the feminist versus the nonfeminist self.

Cosmetic like mascara helps to enhance a person's appearance and attractiveness is an important element of femininity (Gould & Stern, 1989) It is a symbol of gender salience (Deux & Major, 1987) as it conveys a gender division of people because men do not wear makeup to look sexy. Hence, cosmetic serves as a sign of feminity. On top of that, Cash et al. (1985) reported that profeminist women also tended to wear more makeup than others.

However, more is not necessarily better. In the research paper of Fabricant & Gould, 1993 they found that;

Some women in our sample feel that makeup is encouraging the sex-role stereotyping of women to continue, and is impeding to their acceptance as equals, especially in the workforce.

(Fabricant & Gould, 1993)

In order not to appear as the weaker sex, some women might dress more masculine and not use makeup at all to appear manlier in order to compete in the workforce. On the contrary, citing from the research paper of Fabricant & Gould, 1993, Jeanne a lady from their sample resist the anti-makeup norms perceives in her industry (the chemical industry) describe her district manager;

The other one is a district manager, which is a higher level... and she wears no makeup. She looks like a dyke. They (women in the industry) think they have to look like a dykes and they are probably right...people feel that they have to compete with men at that level. And they wear navy blue suits with the white blouses and very little makeup. No eyeshadow, no blusher, no lipstick.

(Fabricant & Gould, 1993)

Supporting Jeanne's resistance against no makeup, Marie another lady from Fabricant & Gould (1993)'s studies shared how she was encouraged to wear makeup to work;

“ I once had a boss who turned to me and said, ‘ I’ll put you in sales if you put on makeup and wear a skirt.’ She found makeup made her more effective at her job.”

(Fabricant & Gould, 1993)

In Singapore Airlines, not only the air-stewardess is required to put on full makeup during their flight. Even the air-stewards are all trained to put on some form of cosmetics such as concealer for their blemishes or dark-eye circles. They meant every stewards and stewardess to look their best when serving the passenger. They are highly recommended to use skin care products and cosmetic products. On the other side of the story, an indoor sales person in Singapore, for example, in a logistic industry are probably not required to wear any makeup at all and it’s up to her to decide if she wants to. At the end of the day, it seems like each and every industry and individuals differ in their mentality and protocol towards the makeup requirement. Cosmetics industry is definitely still booming as ever due the huge demand and the miracle it promises to deliver by using those cosmetic products over advertisements. With the benefits it brings to be physically attractive, and the constant exposure to beautiful women on advertisements, more females in Singapore are aware and consistently reminded of their flaws and the need to conceal those using cosmetics then before.

2. 1. 6 Hedonic motives

There are two basic reasons as to why consumers purchase and consume goods and services, the first one, utilitarian reasons (Bartra and Ahtola,

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1990), and secondly hedonic reasons. Hedonic consumption is generally define by many research articles as motivation by the desire of fantasy, fun, and sensual pleasure; whereas utilitarian consumption is motivated by the functional needs and typically involves products or services that are considered practical or necessary (O'curry & Strahilevitz, 2001).

The desires to improve one's appearance, provide greater self-esteem and superior role performance represent an obvious motivator of adornment use (Bloch & Richins, 1992). A person who is extremely self-conscious pays a great deal of attention to their appearance and are more likely to adore adornments. On top of that, spending time applying makeup, shopping for adornments for oneself are viewed as selfish pampering because it deprived time off the family and job responsibilities as it focuses on self-indulgence rather than others.

Hedonic motives also include, firstly, the desire for novelty and to relieve boredom of oneself; it motivates consumers to frequently change their styles and cosmetic colors. As mentioned above, makeup can be used to create several identities such as fun self, work self, day looks, night looks etc...

Secondly, women seeking to fashion their appearance in a deliberate ways to achieve certain various self-determined goals are hedonistic. Such as being attractive to men, attracting a romantic partner, conforming to social and/or professional norms and/or making a statement about themselves (Cash, Rissi, & Chapman, 1985).

And lastly, by spending more on expensive brands, making purchasing decision based on the aesthetics of the packaging and assembling a

complete set of adornments for example, pink, purple, black, brown, blue mascara to fulfill the desire for collection is also seen as a part of hedonic consumption. Products purchase for collection are seldom used or worn, it merely fulfill the “ want” rather than the “ need” of a person.

2. 2 The pursuit of physical attractiveness through adornments

Physical attractiveness can influence a person’s life quality in many different ways, for instance, it can have a major effect on a person’s emotions, thoughts and behaviours in the day to day life, and not to mention its impact on human interpersonal relationships (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Existing literatures have shown that being physically attractive is an enormous advantage (Adam, 1977; Cann, Siegfried and Pearce, 1981; Langlois, Roggman, & Casey, 1987). Physically attractive people are in love more often and are better liked than are unattractive persons (Byrne, London & Reeves, 1968) They would also get better jobs too and hold more social power. Preference for physically attractive faces has even been observed among infants (Dion, 1977; Langlois, Roggman & Casey, 1987)

In the pursuit of physical attractiveness, utilization of bodily adornment for the purpose of appearance enhancement has been a practice throughout centuries and across all cultures (Bloch & Richins, 1992). It is clear that consumers connect the use of adornments with desirable outcomes (Bloch & Richins, 1992). and engage in a wide range of consumption activities. For instance, Victorian women in the 18th to 19th century wears corset so tight to achieve a socially desired tiny waistline, and in today’s modern society, women are often seen wearing mascara, tinted contact lenses and

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uncomfortable high heels to conform to the socially defined standards of attractiveness (Solomon & Schopler, 1982)

2. 2. 1 Parasomatic Functions of adornments

As mentioned above, utilization of cosmetics and other grooming products for the purpose of appearance enhancement has long been a practice among all cultures (Craik, 1993). Through the acquisition and display of beautiful goods, consumers enjoys enhanced self-concepts and the aesthetic benefit these adornments provide. (Bloch, P. H., & Marsha. L. Richins., 1993)

Consumer invests considerable intangible resources in the pursuit of attractiveness. Time is devoted to the search for, selection, and the use of beauty enhancing products and services. Spending for cosmetics alone accounts for 20 billion per year (Wolf, 1991). Bloch, P. H., & Marsha. L. Richins. (1993)

External adornments such as cosmetics, corset and high heels are said in many research articles that it performs a parasomatic functions. While parasomatic functions serves in most cases as a camouflage or enhancer of one's innate physical characteristics (Bloch & Richins, 1992) Innate physical characteristics are the unchangeable traits like, facial bone structure, height, and body proportions (Franzoi & Herzog, 1987; Schulman & Hoskins, 1986) For the case of mascara, it serves as an enhancer. It helps to thicken and lengthen the user's eyelashes giving an impression of bigger eyes.

When one's using adornments such as mascara, she may feel more attractive and experience improved self-worth. And in today's marketplace, there are a wide arrays of adornments to enhance one's appearance, as

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mentioned in Chapter one those adornments include, cosmetics, fashion apparels and jewelleryes.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3. 1 Sample and data collection

This research targets at female age 18-25 years old, reason being this group of females are easily assessable compared to the older females who are already in the workforce. Thus, non-probability convenience sampling was adopted. Females between the age of 18-25 has a higher chance to encounter instability of the self-esteem as they are more likely to be affected by the critics by others. They are also more likely to compare themselves with others in terms of physical appearance, capability etc... They are bolder and more willing to try out appearance enhancement products such as mascara.

Majority of this targeted age females can be found in schools, hence, to allow a larger number of questionnaires to be collected efficiently, visits to local universities and polytechnics were made for the questionnaires collection by in-person technique, meaning personally by the surveyor. Higher response rate is confirmed by adopting the in-person technique by many researchers. In addition, misunderstanding can be corrected or even avoided with the presence of the surveyor, therefore, during the process of the questionnaires collection even though the respondents was left alone to fill up the questionnaires but the surveyor stayed close within visible area in the event

if there are questions or uncertainties faced by the respondents, it can be quickly resolved by the surveyor.

A total of 120 questionnaires were given out, but only 117 were usable due to the 3 incomplete questionnaires returned. The response rate is at a 97.50%. Besides the collection primary data via questionnaires, secondary research was done by reviewing online published articles and textbooks.

3. 2 Data collection instrument

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are an abundance of qualitative and quantitative studies on whether self-esteem correlates with cosmetic, adornments in general (...author, year). In order to make a more accurate inference about a population from a sample on the female's self-esteem level and consumptions of mascara, doing qualitative may not be justifiable particularly for this research due to the amount of respondents. Hence, a quantitative research was carried out.

The 5 pages structured questionnaires is divided into 3 sections. A letter of introduction was placed in the front page, explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and to provide assurance on the confidentiality and anonymity of every participants of this questionnaire. Section A includes 10 questions adopted from (Rosenberg , 1965) to explores the self-esteem level of the respondent. The questions are presented in a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four-point scale; from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Scorings are given to the 10 questions to measure the self-esteem level; strongly agree (3), agree (2), disagree (1) and strongly disagree (0) for questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 10. Questions 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reversed scored; strongly

agree (0), agree (1), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (3). Respondents who scores 15-25 falls within the normal range, scores below 15 is considered low self-esteem and those who scores above 25 has a relatively high self-esteem level; 0 as the lowest and 30 as the highest.

Section B consists of 5 questions developed specifically for this research to find out the consumptions of mascara. The questions are, frequency of purchase, amount spent on mascara every 3 months, amount of mascara owned, frequency of applications, frequency of touch-up. While section C consists of another 5 questions to find out the demographics of the respondent. It includes age, marital status, education level, occupation and monthly income.

Pilot testing of questionnaires was carried by having 9 females aged ranging from 21-23 years old to complete the survey. The time taken to complete the questionnaire was 8-10 minutes. The purpose was to identify any potential problems that will arise during the process of completing the questionnaire and to ensure that the respondents understand what is required by the questionnaire. Necessary changes were made to reduce non-sampling error and revised questionnaires were distributed to the 120 females.

3. 3 Statistical Test Used

3. 3. 1 Histograms

To test the normality of the data collected, histograms was performed on 6 variables; Self-esteem, Frequency of purchase, amount spent on mascara every 3 months, amount of mascara owned, frequency of application and lastly frequency of touch-up. Looking at the sample figure 1 the data

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collected for all 6 variables shows healthy curves and no extreme skewness. The rest of the figures can be found in the appendix

Figure 1: Histogram of frequency of application

3.3.2 Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability. Hence, the test was carried out to ensure the instruments are able to elicit consistent and reliable response. If the scale shows poor reliability, the individual items within the scale will then be re-examined and modified as required.

As shown in figure... a 0.709 alpha was achieved for this questionnaire. It is within an acceptable range according to Moore & Benhasat, 1991; the minimal reliability should range from 0.70 to 0.80.

Variables

Cronbach's Alpha

Self-esteem

Frequency of purchase

Amount spent on mascara every 3 months

Mascara owned

Frequency of applications

Frequency of touchup

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0.709

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha reliability

3.3.4 Pearson's r correlation coefficient

In order to measure the validity and the empirical relationships between the variables and strength of the relationship is, correlation analysis was conducted.

3.3.5 Cross-tabulations

Cross-tabulations generate information about bivariate relationships. In order to see if the variables are related to one another, bivariate analysis are helpful in testing hypotheses of association and causality. In this research, the self-esteem was categorized into 3 categories; low, normal and high. A cross-tabulation was done to find out if the different level of self-esteem females consume mascara varies by looking at the mode value.

3.3.6 Linear Regression

Linear regression is widely used in many disciplines such as social sciences, biological and behavioral and to describe possible relationships between variables. On top of that, linear regression has many practical uses. It helps to analyze the relationship between the observed set of y and x values. Given a number of variables y and a variables x linear regression analysis can be applied to quantify the strength of the relationship between y and x and also to assess if x has any relationship with y at all. Linear regression was also ranked as one of the most important tools. Having mentioned in previous chapters, the objective of this research is to find out if individual

self-esteem level affects the consumption of mascara; therefore, linear regression was used to assess the relationship between the categorized self-esteem level and the 5 subcategory dependent variables as shown below;

H1

Self-esteem level affects the amount of mascara owned

Self-esteem level does not affect the amount of mascara owned

H2

Self-esteem level affects the frequency of mascara applied

Self-esteem level does not affect the frequency of mascara applied

H3

Self-esteem level affects the frequency of purchase

Self-esteem level does not affect the frequency of purchase

H4

Self-esteem level affects the amount spent on purchasing mascara

Self-esteem level does not affect the amount spent on purchasing mascara

In summary, the purpose of conducting pearson's correlation coefficient, cross-tabulations and linear regression is to find out whether self-esteem correlates with the consumption of mascara and explain the strength of relationship if any.

With the aid of those statistical tests, whether the hypotheses above will be accepted or rejected and at the end of the day whether individual self-esteem level will affect the consumption of single adornment “ mascara” will be further discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

4. 1 Cross-tabulations

FrequencyOfPurchase

Never

More than 3 months

Every 3 Months

Every 2 Months

Every Month

Catselfesteem

low

4

10

1

2

0

average

8

60

12

5

3

high

0

8

3

1

0

Total

12

78

16

8

3

Table 2: Self-esteem level versus Frequency of purchase

Amount spent on mascara every 3 months

N. A

Less than \$50

\$50 to less than \$100

Catselfesteem

low

4

12

1

average

8

73

7

high

0