

Consumer buying behaviour: the cosmetics industry



Abstract

Women have an inherent love of beauty. The rapid economic growth, coupled with the huge development of cosmetics industry in China, contributes to the significant changes of cosmetics consumer behavior. Cosmetics have become a routine tool to make women more presentable. Understanding behaviour of consumers is a key to the success of business. As a huge potential consumer group, understanding of their attitudes and buying behavior towards cosmetics seems to be necessary. This study focused on investigating and analysing the purchasing patterns for female college students. Via the systemic study, companies will be beneficial to have a better understanding of college females in terms of cosmetics purchasing.

The survey was conducted with focus group and questionnaires. The results of questionnaires will be analyzed by using SPSS and data were analysed by frequency analysis, cross-tab analysis and multi-respond analysis.

Introduction

1. 1 Research background

With the expansion of social group and rising incomes, beauty consciousness among women has changed. Cosmetics entered into women's lives on a daily basis. The act of beautifying physical appearance not only becomes a distinct way to express one's image but also a pattern to show respect to other people (Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2007).

Following decade of years' tremendous economic development, the Chinese cosmetics industry is undergoing fast changes and advancement. It further enhances the consumption level of urban and rural residents, improve the consumption environment, optimize consumption structures, and contribute to expansion of the fields of consumption (Tao, 2005). Consumer categories such as cosmetics benefited from the rapid growth in consumer spending, and have become a huge money maker. Meanwhile, the increasing fashion and beauty consciousness, as a natural outgrowth of rising incomes, diversify consumers' demands. Obviously, this potential has not only attracted international cosmetics companies, but also led to more domestic cosmetics producers trying to enter the market. As a consequence, competition will be further intensified among foreign and domestic companies.

Previous research indicated that female's spending on cosmetics still making up of the main income for the entire cosmetics market. An increasing number of female college students starting to show strong interest in enhancing their appearance through make-up (Huang, 2003). With a high level of interests in appearance, they have revealed a great potential. College students represent not only the remarkable consumption potential but also the future mainstream. Thus, the female college students' patterns of consumption gradually become a major concern (Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2007). Studying consumer behavior enables companies to understand why consumers make the purchase decision and predict how they will react to promotional messages. On the purpose of maintaining and expanding market share, understanding of consumer behavior will be required to suit

their changing needs. Therefore, research need to be conducted to provide cosmetic companies with basic data required in establishing marketing strategies for advancement into Chinese market to tailor consumption patterns of female college students.

1. 2 Scope and objectives of study

When reviewing the literatures on the cosmetic and toiletry industry, the existing research related to Chinese cosmetic consumer is typically concerned with the entire market. Not many studies are available specifically focus on college students' buying behavior. In the regard, considering the massive size of China, the present study limits itself to the female college students. By and large, this dissertation makes an attempt to investigate and analyse purchasing pattern of female college cosmetic consumers. In particular, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

To pinpoint and obtain a general picture of the cosmetics industry in China. On completion of this objective, the intention would be to get an insight into the cosmetics environment and the rapid growth trend of the industry so as to have a good knowledge base that can support the study throughout the dissertation.

To investigate and analyse cosmetics buying behavior of female college students in China. The intention of this objective would be to a) understand how college student perceive cosmetics, b) identify their characteristics in terms of cosmetics purchase, and c) develop a greater understanding of motivation for purchasing, different factors involved in purchase decision of cosmetics and how product attribute, such as price, quality etc, effects

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buying patterns, thereby mapping out a model for female college students' purchasing behavior.

Based on the analysis of the research carried out, briefly propose a number of key recommendations enable companies in the industry to target their marketing strategies at college cosmetics consumers.

The data that plan to be gathered for this research will be obtained from both primary and secondary resources. The secondary sources of data will be derived from published articles from internet database, journals and magazines, theses, and related studies on cosmetics. On the other hand, the primary source of information regarding the study will be gathered from focus groups and questionnaires, prepared by the researcher, which will be delivered to the respondents of the research.

1. 3 Significance of study

The boom of cosmetics industry in China has brought about changes in consumer behavior. The importance of the study cannot be understated. It is anticipated that the outcome of this study will certainly contribute towards a better understanding of the changing perception and behaviour of cosmetics buyers.

Furthermore, there are a number of literatures that have discussed the female consumer behavior with regards to the purchase of cosmetics. This study will combine the relevant literature with own findings from primary research to provide an in-depth discussion. Therefore, the study will be significant in terms of better positioning of products and more effective

marketing communication to tailor the demand of college females. This means that the findings will not only be able to benefit both foreign and domestic companies who have the willingness to enter the market but also various retailers who want to expand sales.

Literature review

Many theories have been proposed to explain consumer behaviors within certain industry area. Understanding today's consumer is the key to realising the future needs and expectations of beauty consumers, and is potentially relevant to improving marketing effectiveness (Tang, 2008). Previous studies hold that knowing the psychological process by which consumers make purchasing decisions enables marketers to grasp opportunities and even predict the shifts and future development trend of the consumer markets. Additionally, it exerts positive impact on improving cosmetics sales (Yau, 1994).

Previous studies regarding the patterns of purchasing cosmetics

2. 1 Relationships between cosmetics and females

few systematic studies have examined that

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In this generation, cosmetics are used by women of practically all walks of life

High-end cosmetics

The desire to be beautiful could be considered a human tendency, as it is exhibited by almost every culture all around the world.

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Research suggests that beauty consciousness among people in general is changing. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) reported that people's needs for appearances and materialism were increasing.

That is human beings wanted to satisfy the need to look and feel good. This created a boom in the cosmetic and toiletries sector across the world. Chambers Encyclopedia defines cosmetics as (a) articles intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled or sprayed on, introduced into or otherwise applied to the human body or any part thereof for cleaning, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or altering the appearance and (b) articles intended for use as a component of such articles. Now a variety of cosmetic and toiletries ranging from natural to sophisticated items are available in the market. The pattern and preference of use of these items vary according to different segments of gender, age and socio-economic class. When we review the literature on the cosmetic and toiletry industry, not many studies are available especially about Indian scenario.

2. 2 Patterns of women purchasing cosmetics

Most early theories of consumer behavior were concerned with the purchasing characteristics and influential factors. Schutte and Ciarlante (Schutte & Ciarlante, 1998) argued that in China the purchase decision is typically based on the usefulness of the product such as its physical characteristics and price value. However, recent studies outlined by Liang (Liang, 2008) suggested that women's purchasing pattern differs with men. Their buying decision tend to influenced easily by the purchasing environment, and have more impulse purchase. Besides, generally speaking, females have strong self-awareness when purchasing, which means majority of the decisions were made on the basis of personal preference or subjective impression, sensation.

2. 2. 1 Characteristics of purchasing cosmetics

In general, female invest more money on various cosmetic products and even spared no expense because they pay more attention to appearance than men (Huang, 2003). The characteristics of modern Chinese females regarding cosmetics purchase can be summed up in three points:

Easily affected by market atmosphere

Normally, products promotion, advertising and other factors can easily tempt young females to make irrational purchases. In a research by Cong (Cong, 2008), results showed that 56% of females bought unneeded or unexpected cosmetics products as a result of discount, followed by the purchase due to interests aroused by shop environment and sales exhibition (40. 8%).

Accounts for 22. 8% of females who bought useless products or had irrational consumption were affected by advertisement. Thus, compare with men, female is prone to be encouraged over-consumption by commercial appeals.

Mood consumption

Female tend to have more generous sentiments in the process of purchase. Their certain desires are prone to be roused and affected by mental activities. Oliver Yau (Yau, 1994) contended that mood consumption normally occurs in two situations. One of which might be triggered by delusion under particular circumstance. For example, lots of females had encountered situation that unexpected spending happens after being paid out the salary. Another circumstance that contributes to mood consumption is likely to happen in the case of that female with unusual mood. Such as, a considerable number of female go shopping when they feel frustrated and happy.

Relatively low loyalty to brands

Chinese cosmetics consumers show less passion on being loyal to brands. They would like to try several brands to compare them rather than be from the same brand (Labbrand, 2009). Besides, another reason that contributes to low brand loyalty is seasonal consumption of Chinese consumers due to the significant difference in climate between summer and winter (Mo, 2008). Customers have to change their purchase habit to suit the season. For instance, customer tends to use more sunscreen to protect their skin and less oily cream in summer than they do in winter.

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2. 2. 2 Purchasing influences

As established by Access Asia Limited (Access Asia Limited, 2008), Chinese consumers heavily rely on products, stores and services they know and trust. The same philosophy is applicable equally to product brands, with word-of-mouth communication proving to be a pervasive reason for consumers to change brands and most potent marketing tools in China. This is supported by Xuecai Liang (Liang, 2008) who claimed that among the females, friends group plays a very important role on information communicating about different brands of cosmetics. Some people will only buy products that they have been recommended by friends. However, the increasing effects of advertising on the urban and younger Chinese buyer cannot be neglected as their media exposure increases (Yang, 2004).

In addition, the physical characteristics like reliability, innovative technology and high brand profile are the important factors when make a cosmetic purchase, a study by Yuyuan Huang suggested that (Huang, 2003). Taking different attitudes towards local and foreign brands as example, Huang explained that foreign brand represent high quality and status at the Chinese consumers' view, while local brand are perceived as shortage of these selling advantages, even both product sold at the same price. Besides, it worth to notice that local cosmetics consumers now are prepared to pay more for better quality, service, and convenience.

The variety of choice is seen as another factor. According to Shen, Liu and Huang (Shen, Liu, & Huang, 2005), majority of the consumers will prefer to shop in large stores when they can easily reach such places, whereas finding

the lack of product choice in smaller stores (especially in terms of range of price) to be embarrassed. It can be argued that larger stores will provide more bargains, which means the products tend to have higher price value. Such stores are also considered as being more convenient to shop in, contributing to the flourishing development of the discount retailing sector over recent years (Access Asia Limited, 2008).

Moreover, in the eyes of Chinese consumer, the depth of communication brands had with their customers is vital. According to survey conducted by Labbrand (Labbrand, 2009), Chinese consumers have a strong demand to communicate with brands. For instance, they would like to receive inquiry from brand concerning their feeling about the products they use, or to be informed in time when brand have special events. Besides, consumers considered that from communicating with brand they can better compare and finally find the most suitable cosmetics for their specific needs and desires. Thus, it can be argued that companies who kept contact with consumers tend to have higher sales and brand loyalty.

Industry review

The huge advances witnessed over the past two decades have improved the living standards of millions of Chinese citizens. With the upgrade of living standards, private consumption among expenses has reached a higher level. The rise in private consumption translated into greater spending on personal care products in the booming cosmetics industry (Tao, 2005). In China, the development of the cosmetic industry has been to a new stage and it shows a sound momentum of growth.

Market potential: Chinese cosmetic market continues to surge

In recent year, the continuous rapid economic growth generates good environment and favorable development space for cosmetics industry maintaining a rapid rate of growth. In 2003, china had become the second-largest cosmetics market in Asia after Japan, and was the eighth largest in the world (Li, 2005). According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of China, the Chinese cosmetics market generated total revenues of RMB¥488.3 billion in 2007, representing annual sales grew by 26.3 percent over the same period last year. In 2008 and 2009, the sales grew by 22.2% and 17.2%, respectively, over the same period, to reach respective values of RMB¥596.5 and RMB¥348.2 billion in 2008 (HKTDC, 2009). At the same time, it has also been taken note that the performance of the market is forecast to decelerate, but still increase by approximately 13% annually (Datamonitor, 2009). Overall, the cosmetics industry is surely faster than the economic growth which means the long term potential of the Chinese cosmetic market is fairly vast.

Additionally, given its population of approximately 1.3 billion, China has the largest market potential. "China's share of the global cosmetic market may seem small compared to huge markets like the US and Japan, but with a population of over a billion people, the growth potential there is staggering," said Lenka Contreras, vice president and head of the Consumer Products practice for Kline's research division (Pitman, 2005). China's cosmetics market is still far from saturation.

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Characteristics of china's cosmetics market

The consumer market development is vigorous

With economy expanding and mass livelihood improving, awareness of personal well-being prompts strong and continuous growth in the consumer market. It not only reforms the consumption pattern but also drive the sales (Asia consulting, 2008). In that sense, it is predicted that the Chinese cosmetic consumer market is dynamic.

Women stimulating the market growth

Female is still an essential part of Chinese cosmetics market, especially those office ladies. As Chinese women are now increasingly beauty consciousness and awareness, the use of cosmetics has become a part of their daily routine (Fung, 2005). Accordingly, the rising proportion of young females in white-collar jobs has formed the loyal customer basis for this market, and the cosmetics sales have been driven. Their spending on cosmetic is outgrowing over other areas. National Bureau of Statistics has come up with data that shows women ages from 20-54 account for 27. 21% of the total population. Being more economically independent, the enormous number of consumers in the group will generate huge demands than ever (HKTDC, 2009).

The famous-brand effect appears day by day on the market

The rising sales of famous-brand products reflected that customer's attitudes concerning cosmetics have changed (Chen & Xue, 2005). As the improving resident's consumption level, people are willing to pay more attentions to <https://assignbuster.com/consumer-buying-behaviour-the-cosmetics-industry/>

those well-known cosmetic products which were considered with high grade, quality assurance and harmlessness. For example, customers will be highly delighted with brand-name products that can prevent wrinkles or keep moisture balance in the skin. Due to the impression lifted in mind, its sales increased dramatically and gradually become the main growth point of the entire market. Instead, few shows interest in low-end cosmetic products (China Consulting, 2008).

Consumer

In Chinese cosmetics market, consumers' ways of spending are undergoing a significant change. Diany Zhang, president of China Cosmetics Association, claimed that modern customers behave more independently on consumption. Consumers tend to utilize different channels and rely on various measuring standard to get a pleasing cosmetics, rather than dependent on advertising. In addition, changes also occur on consumer group. Depending on the difference in requests on brand, quality, price and personal affordability, consumers were divided into low, middle and high classes. And, every class has a great number of loyal customers (HKTDC, 2009).

Women of all ages were concerned with their 'lifestyle'. The rising purchasing ability of women helped them to spend more on personal grooming. This grooming consciousness was encouraged by women's active participation in advertisement or fashion shows, such as the popular Fashion TV program (Pitman & Simon, 2009). In china, consumption pattern of consumers is changing. The consumers have become globalized in their

thinking and are ready to enjoy with some impulsive shopping. Access to various brands and products give them better knowledge towards cosmetics, due to fast-flowing information (Tang, 2008). Therefore, as a cosmetics producer, motivations and type of products purchased should be different depending upon the segment of consumer targeted.

Competitive situation

The business environment in China has been improving, especially since 2001, when the country joined the World Trade Organization. The commitment to opening its market in compliance with the WTO rules has further stimulated the market, with greater participation from international and domestic player. Consequently, competition between multinationals and local players is heating up across the country (Utsunomiya, 2003).

3. 4. 1 Foreign Brands Continue to Dominate in the Chinese Market

International brands play a dominant role in the upper-end cosmetics market, such as P&G (Olay), Unilever (Pond's), Shiseido, L'Oreal and Estee Lauder etc (See Table 1) , due to young women's pursuit of well-known brands in literary. These large multinational cosmetic players have entered the mainland market one after another to build their own manufacturing basis and sales network (Sunfaith China Ltd, 2005) and many of those players have been operating successfully in the China market, making their brands well-known and occupy about 80% of the total market share.

According to certain statistics, the world top 15 brand of cosmetics had set up own specialty stores (HKTDC, 2002).

Even so, those cosmetics magnates have accelerated expansion into low-end products. For example, Avon and L'Oreal launched low-end cosmetics one after another to suit the changing customers' needs and purchasing behavior, and expand the market share (HKTDC, 2009).

Table 1 Top Ten Preferred Colour Cosmetics Products, 2006 (Access Asia Limited, 2008)

Brand

% Share

Maybelline

10.3

L'Oreal

9.9

Shisiedo

8.0

Lancôme

7.3

Avon

6.6

Estée Lauder

5. 5

Yue Sai

5. 1

Revlon

4. 7

Amway

3. 8

H2O

3. 2

Others

35. 6

TOTAL

100. 0

3. 4. 2 Transformation of local Chinese companies is under way

Compared with foreign companies domestic players have smaller market share due to several weaknesses. For instance, weak financial ability, lack of research and development capability, and lack of experience in brand management and marketing. Therefore, most of those players produce low-end product with only a small number making high-end product that can

compete with foreign players (Li, 2005). Nonetheless, as the economic growth domestic companies has undertaken a transformation, gradually changed the impression with low quality and price, and entered into high-end market so as to become more competitive (Ocn, 2008).

Facing with the open markets and trade liberalization in China, the previous mentioned increasingly fierce competition is inevitable. On the purpose of responding to the changing customer demands, market players have devised a variety of marketing strategies so as to create impressive product image in customers' mind and drive them to spend more money on their own products.

Distribution channel???

SWOT analysis of the female market

Future develop trend???

[http://www. cosmeticsdesign. com/Products-Markets/Asian-cosmetics-players-opt-for-natural-and-organic-standards](http://www.cosmeticsdesign.com/Products-Markets/Asian-cosmetics-players-opt-for-natural-and-organic-standards)

Cosmetics players opt for natural and organic standards

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the main reasons for boom in cosmetic industry as increasing fashion and beauty consciousness coupled with rising incomes and focus on health and fitness.

A natural and holistic approach attracts these women, especially where there is an interest in complementary health and in overall well being.

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Key issues

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Summary of key issues related to your literature and industry review

The key issues section is where you, having completed the situation analysis consider what are the key issues facing the company and the market. So in a sense it is a summary chapter at the end of the first section of your report. In this chapter you should give an indication of what you think are the most important issues facing the company and the market.

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Consumer

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Company

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Research methods

5. 1 Approach

5. 2 Data gathering method

5. 3 Data Processing

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In this study, the self-administered semi-structured questionnaires will be used to collect quantitative data and the interviews will be used to provide qualitative insights into the data collected. The data will then be presented by means of graphical representations and illustration and the difference would be highlighted.

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Research question

Secondary research:

The following information could be considered using desk research to give a general review and help to assist analysis of primary researches:

Cosmetics industry review

The purpose of this part is to find out important information concerning the entire cosmetics markets in china. Main issues that need to investigate include:

Main characteristics of Cosmetics Industry in china

What current market development trend is

What Competitive situation is within cosmetics market

Development opportunities of the cosmetics market within china

This information will be helpful to better understand and form general perceptions of industry situation in china.

There are several ways to obtain required information above. Data sources:

Internet Databases

Go to college library website and use its databases, such as:

Marketline

Academic Search Premier

Business Insights Access Asia Series

Business Source Premier

To look for industry reports and e-journals those contain information regarding the Chinese cosmetic market. Find out information about the

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current cosmetics market and even see what demographics suit Shiseido to introduce the product to.

Applying databases is a good way to get information due to its huge information storage volume and reliability. Most of them are academic-based, and have a comprehensive understanding on specific field.

Websites:

Look up necessary websites such as www.shiseidochina.com where might be possible to get some internal data sources. The use of this data is to define the competitive position of the firm, an evaluation of a marketing strategy the firm has used in the past, or gaining a better understanding of the company. Even, their past researches on consumer behaviors. The internal data sources might be sales & marketing reports and accounting & financial reports of the company.

Magazines & Newspapers

It is also possible to look at some Chinese cosmetics industry magazines so that to acquire valuable industry information and some current cosmetic issues happened in china.

Quantitative & Qualitative methods

In order to ascertain consumers' cosmetics buying patterns and product satisfactions, quantitative and qualitative researches are both required to be implemented. It should be noticed that the understandings of consumers would exert significant impacts on company's marketing strategies. Besides,

it is valuable for coming up with comments and suggestions to Client Company after analyzing Chinese customer.

The main objectives of quantitative and qualitative research falls into several parts as followed:

Motive of Purchasing Cosmetic Product

Motives are defined as general drives that direct a consumer's behavior toward attaining his or her need and the motivational drive directly affects the specific benefit criteria consumers use to evaluate products. Thus, understand buying motivations will provide evidences to Client Company to better position its products.

Information Sources

There are differences in using information sources among various age groups. Knowing customers through what kinds of channels to get products' information could help Shiseido sell products more effectively to target audiences.

Evaluative Criteria for Purchasing Cosmetics

As for criteria for purchasing cosmetics, the responses will be in order of quality, price and volume of content. It is crucial to see what element is more important to customers when buying cosmetics. This will do company a favor to develop products or marketing strategies.

Place of Purchasing Cosmetics

In terms of the place of purchase, primary research should focus on finding out the reasons for selecting these places of purchase. Then, company can identify the perfect place to sell its products on the basis of information provided by survey.

Satisfactions and dissatisfactions

It is well known that satisfactions with a product will perform huge influences on its sales volume. This primary research should identify the level of satisfactions towards Shiseido and try to find out any aspects that consumers wish to see changes.

Quantitative research

Questionnaires

As the measuring tools of this study, questionnaire based on previous studies and results of preliminary research were used. In this case, this study was carried out in the country of China. Therefore, questionnaire in English should be translated into Chinese. To reach a variety of different customers, questionnaires are supposed to carry out at different city within china so that to get as many points of views as possible.

Questionnaire is consisted of 3 main sections:

Section 1 is simply some questions on demographical characteristics of respondents like gender, age and occupation etc. to profile consumers.

Section 2 emphasizes on customers' buying behavior on cosmetics. As objectives mentioned above. For instance, purchase motivation information

sources, evaluative criteria for purchasing basic skin care items and color make-up products, store type of purchasing cosmetic product and reasons for store selection persons to exert influence upon purchasing and satisfaction/dissatisfaction on cosmetics purchased.

Section 3 focuses more on investigating customer's perceptions concerning Shiseido products. Such as, customers' brand awareness of Shiseido, brand image and brand position in customers' mind.

Additionally, the results of questionnaires will be analyzed by using SPSS. The analysis conducted in the study with SPSS statistics package includes frequency analysis, cross-tab analysis, analysis of variance and Multiple Range test.

Survey

In order to keep questionnaire short enough to maintain respondents' interests, there must be some questions cannot be asked. Thus in this project, I will also consider conductin