

Experimentation and product trial at lipstick displays essay sample



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This paper investigates consumer's product trial behavior at lipstick displays. Since most female customers try lipsticks either on their arms or on their lips before they make purchase decision, lipstick trial experience can exert an important effect on customer's willingness to buy the lipsticks. Our observation cover the whole lipstick trial process, including exploring, selecting and trying the lipsticks. According to the observation, most customers were concerned about trying lipsticks on their lips and preferred to try lipsticks on arms first.

The concern is about the sanitary condition of the lipstick samples and the uncomfortable try-on-lip experience. Besides, it was found that customer's interaction with other people, such as friends, salesperson, was also an important factor that will influence the lipstick trial experience. What's more, different retail formats witness a different product trial behavior. Based on the model of customer processing product trial, the model of consumer trust in retail store service setting, and several other theories, some strategies are provided to change customer's attitude.

It is recommended that lipsticks samples with higher sanitary condition and more considerate service should be provided for customers to improve their product trial experience. In addition, cosmetics store can utilize the impact of companion to launch related promotion to raise the sales of the lipsticks. Different retail formats should adopt different strategies to engage customer. The store with high customer flow should also come up with tactics to help eliminate the negative effects brought by crowded environment. Introduction of Phenomenon We observed female customers' behavior of trying lipsticks during the lipstick purchasing process.

Lipstick trial process serves as an important role in triggering the final purchase decision. Most female customers tend to try the lipstick first to see if the shade fits them before making the purchase decision. However, the sample lipsticks may have been tried out for thousands of times and seem not that clean. Though some customers are still willing to directly try the sample lipsticks on lips, many others are reluctant to try the lipsticks out of sanitary consideration. They may either try the lipsticks on their arms instead of lips or just give up and walk away.

No matter in what condition, the behavior of trying lipsticks will exert an effect on customer's purchase decision and ultimately influence the sales of lipsticks. Thus, we want to observe female customers' behavior of exploring, selecting and trying lipsticks in physical cosmetic stores and analyze their attitudes towards product trial experience. Literature Review O'guinn, Tanner and Maeng conducted research on the relationship between social density and the willingness to pay real money. Their research shows that consumers tend to associate higher product valuation with more social space.

The high-density context may lead to consumer's association with stressful environment and trigger unpleasant emotions, which may be diverted to the products. Therefore, consumers are less willing to pay for the products if they shop under crowded circumstances. Paolo. Guenzi developed " a comprehensive model of customer trust in a retail service setting" (see Exhibit 1). In this model, Guenzi developed three drives to build consumers' trust in retail stores: trust in the salesperson, trust in store trust in store

branded products. Marketers can build customers trust through these three methods.

According to a study assessing women's involvement with cosmetics, importance-interest, sign-symbolic-social, subjective risk and risk importance play an essential role in determining the level of involvement. This study also illustrated that quasi-causal relationship existed between antecedent involvement and consequent involvement. Robert B. Cialdini has put forward six basic principles that people can use for persuasion, including liking, reciprocity, scarcity, social proof, consistency, authority. Reciprocity is an efficient method to persuade consumers to change their attitudes.

Reciprocity means people would like to repay who is kind for them by treating same thing back. Using this theory could influence consumers' mood in order to change their attitude. Besides, social proof principle refers to the belief that people tend to follow the similar trend and peers power can be a effective way to influence consumers' attitude. Sunday O. E. Ewah and Atim E. Esang developed a model for the consumer's processing of product trial (see Exhibit 2). This model comprises several concepts (factors) that are interlaced to make an impact on the formation of the consumers' attitudes towards the brand (AB) through product trial.

The experiential and non-experiential attributes are the direct and indirect stimulus involved in the trial process, with experiential attributes like the color, moistening, package of lipsticks, etc. For the experiential attributes, perceived validity of product trial can be one of the factors determining whether the product trial is diagnostic. Then, the diagnosticity will influence

the evaluative/expected value from the experiential attributes, and finally these attributes affect the overall evaluation of the brand performance.

Basically, this model is designed to help marketer make effort to increase the consumers' evaluation of the trial experience so that they can further analyze the consumers' whole evaluation of the product and brand. Xu-Priour, D. , and Cliquet, G examined whether in-store shopping experience affects cosmetic shoppers ' attitudes in different countries. The factors that influence shopping experience include social aspects of retail environment, service quality, browsing, bargain hunting, brand experience and social interaction. To get more information, researchers conducted questionnaires.

They find the results that shopping with friends can bring enjoyment and good brand experiences can promote the purchase intention. Also, social interaction can influence the customers' enjoyable perception of shopping experience and the following decision-making. Research Design This research used the close observation method to observe the consumer behavior in order to uncover the factors that influence their attitude and decisions. Considering that customers could not try lipsticks in drug and pharmacy stores such as CVS and Walgreen, we chose the following distribution channels to conduct our observation.

1)Specialty stores such as MAC (2) Multi-brands outlets such as Sephora (3)Department stores such as Macy's. We visited the stores on weekends because the stores have higher footfall so that we could have more objects of observation. Our observation started when consumers were exploring at lipsticks counters and ended when consumers left the lipsticks displays. In

multi-brand outlets, chances are that consumers may consider purchasing other cosmetics products before going to the cashier. Therefore, we were not going to confirm the purchase action in the cashier.

If consumers put the lipsticks in the baskets, we assumed that they were going to buy it. By behaving like customers, we observed the phenomenon with less chances to be noticed. We pretended to try lipstick to conduct close observation, and acted as texting messages when we used cell phones to take notes. Also, we designed a note-take template (see Exhibit 3) to record any details that could be the stimulus of the customers' behavior. Research Analysis and Interpretation A number of findings were found in this observation.

One includes the intrapersonal factors like hygienic concern and trial experience that will influence the customer's lipstick trial behavior, and the other two respects are the interpersonal (companion) factor and the different formats of retailers respectively. Intrapersonal factors that influence lipstick trial behavior The intrapersonal factors such as hygienic problem and personal lipstick trial experiences play an important role in consumer's decision making process to purchase lipsticks. The worries about the sanitation of sample lipsticks might restrain customers' trial motivation leading to sales decrease.

This assumption is supported by our observation and secondary researches. Firstly, we found that customers were less likely to try the disgusting-looking lipsticks directly on their lips, so they had to try the color on hands. For example, one customer tried one lipstick which had smooth and " clean"

surface on her lips but tried the rugged lipstick on her hand. However, according to celebrity makeup artist Rae Morris, the skin tone is not like the skin tone of our lips. Thus, customers usually cannot make decisions merely by trying the color against the skin tone of hand.

Just as we observed, almost all the customers who tried lipsticks on their lips purchased the lipsticks at last; customers who tried colors only on hand or even didn't try, however, usually gave up purchasing the lipstick. In addition, in the observation, two customers' trial behavior were found different from others. One tried the color on her hand at first, and then put the hand next to her lips. The other one also tried the color on the hand firstly, and then put the lipstick next to her face. At last, they both didn't buy the lipsticks.

It is very possible that they could not figure out whether the color fits them good even if they had put the color next to their face. The personal lipstick trial experience is another key factor of product trials. Once some consumers try lipsticks on their lips, they would like to take product trials in innumerable times. Because according to the research, consumers with low motivation, liability and opportunity and with emotional drive would try lipsticks numerously. Additionally, trying lipsticks is the most real and trustful way to elucidate whether the lipsticks fit them.

However, the tissue and remover water the cosmetic stores provided are low quality. Most of those consumers had to wipe their lips at least three times to totally remove after they tried one lipstick. After they have tried three to six different lipsticks, from their nonverbal clues, specifically their frown, showing that they were losing patient and getting little angry. Licking lips by

themselves and wiping their lips by their hands while watching the mirror showed their lips were chapped and dry because of using low quality tissue and remove water.

Then, in the next product trail, the color drawn by lipsticks on their lips were unevenly and some of lipsticks were lumped. Consequently, they wiped lipsticks again quickly and left with tightened lips without purchasing because the unhappy experiences have negative impacts on their attitude, such as losing their interests, for the reason that consumer's mood could influence affective attitude and then, affects the purchasing behavior. Many lipsticks, especially MAC's lipsticks, are not moist enough so that frequent product trails without moisturizing would make lips into a slightly dehydrated situation.

Therefore, lipsticks could not express the best performance but make consumers to challenge their quality and the impression. As a result, the sales of lipsticks would decrease. Companion's impacts on the lipstick trial behavior In cosmetics retailers like Sephora, customers will always face multiple choices. For those who have not strong intention to purchase a lipstick may easily get into hesitation during their exploring, selecting and trying process. At this moment, social interaction plays an important role in consumer's attitude formation and decision-making.

To be specific, the presence of companions beside the consumers can be a vital environmental stimulus (Borges, Chebat, & Babin, 2010). Several couples of customers and their companions were observed. Their friends were found exerting impacts on consumers' lipstick trial and later decision

making, such as giving advice and providing lipstick information. For example, two around-25 Asian women stopped in front of the YSL lipstick display. One was wearing delicate make-up while the other looked plainer. The plainer woman said, “ I don’t know...MAC and YSL, which brand suits me? ” and her friend said, “ Well as for me, YSL is my first choice. MAC is too dry. Try this one. It’s the best-selling color. I also have one. ”

Then she just tried on YSL on lips but she looked at the mirror for 5 minutes, hesitating. The friend kept saying “ You know this color is so well-selling, all the displays in China have already out of stock. ” Finally they bought this lipstick. As can be seen from this example, the companion shared her experience of the lipstick and the shopper is open and willing to listen to her companion’s suggestion. The customer relies on the perceived expertise of her friend rather than turns to the salesperson to be informed of advantages and features of the lipstick.

Thus, the companion’s advisory tone stimulates the customer who was still hesitating to make decision. Another interesting observation is also about two younger girls who are around 20. Both of them were trying lipsticks on their lips. When one girl turned to her friend and said, “ I like this color! Maybe I should buy it? ” Her friend just glanced for a second and said, “ Yeah, if you really like it” in a very flat tone, still focusing on her own trial. Then the girl began hesitating, looking at herself in the mirror. At this time, an elder female stranger passed by behind her, saying “ Cute color”.

The girl smiled happily and finally bought it. In this case, the customer tends to share her look to the companion, seeking their approval. Although

consumers are normally believed to rely more on their friends' perceived expertise to get advice when they try to make a purchasing decision, especially for the close ones, the estimation of the friends' knowledge are sometimes less precise than those who are less close for individualized knowledge (Gershoff & Johar, 2006). So it makes sense customers may turn to others who are not so familiar with as well.