



A Study on the Brand Choice Decisions of Consumers With Reference to Cosmetics

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *The products are valued by the consumers not only based on the need and importance but also the brand. This research paper is analyzing the consumer buying decision of cosmetic products and the factors considered in the process of decision making. The research also considers the satisfaction level of consumers of the selected brand. The study reveals the consumers brand loyalty, brand preference and their mental attitude towards their brand. The consumers consider the quality and price of the product at the time of purchase. The promised result of the product is also one of the factors considered in the decision making process. The awareness of the brand to the consumers is influenced by advertisement. Therefore proper advertisement is necessary for promoting the brands for the cosmetics.*

Introduction

Managers have voiced concerned about the potential for dilution of parent brand equity in extending into other product categories. Some have argued that brand extensions, especially ill-fitting ones, dilute parent brand positioning, whereas others have suggested that, properly managed extensions can reinforce positioning.

According to American marketing association, "a brand is a name, term, symbol, or design or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or service of one seller, or group of seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors". "A brand is a combination of attributes and benefits that is offered for sale by a particular organisation. A brand can be a product or service as long as it is being sold by an organisation."

Previous research on brand choice has offered multiple theoretical definitions of the loyalty construct. One definition is that brand loyalty is a true measure of brand preference. An alternative definition is that loyalty is a habitual behaviour when sensitivity to price and promotion is low. Many research findings captured brand loyalty as an exponentially weighted average of all previous purchase. Although this is one of the most widely used measure of loyalty in the choice literature, results from this operationalisation are sometimes difficult to interpret because the measure includes both temporal and cross sectional component. In addition it is not clear whether the appearance of non-stationary preferences is real or if it is driven by the increasing number of observations used to calculate loyalty, which consequently decreases the error variance with each additional choice observation.

It could be argued that in many perhaps the majority of real-world cases involving brand extensions, consumers are exposed only to neutral or favourable information about the extensions. Many studies have shown that exposure to this type of extension information generally does not harm global attitudes towards parent but may harm more specific parent brand belief.

Review of Literature

Among specific marketing mix variables, pricing appears to have the most consistent impact in studies. Promotions such as sales promotions have shown influence on brand choice which ultimately effect bottom-line prices for consumers. For example, pricing promotions could involve coupons or simply a reduction of price within the product category (Singh et al. 2005; Papatia and Krishnamurthi, 1996). In probability modeling studies, it has been shown that displays and features have some impact on brand choice, but this evidence is

not as overwhelming or as consistent as other factors among brand choice research studies (Alvarez and Casielles, 2005). Product attributes have high importance on discovering what areas of the product can be altered in order to make their brand more appealing to the consumer. According to current research, it has been found that the greater the number of brand attributes for a product, then the more likely the consumer is to make that particular brand choice (Romaniuk, 2003). Product attributes are important to marketers in order to differentiate products from their competitors (Aaker et al. 1992).

Personality factors have shown an impact based on what brands consumers buy. Brand credibility has shown significance in determining brand choice as well (Erdem and Swait, 2004). Other areas such as purchase time, purchase order, and product name have been researched but have not been deemed to be main factors in determining a brand choice decision (Charlton and Ehrenberg, 1973). These studies allow marketers to understand consumer switching behaviors and allow for market share penetration, which give marketers a better understanding of what elements effect a particular brand or product category (Wagner and Taudes, 1986).

Consumers can develop emotional feelings for products, specifically brands. These emotions toward brands can have a major influence based on brand choice. Research has shown that emotions lead to an interaction with the product on a personal level (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). These emotions can lead to brand loyalty, paying premiums, and influencing others to purchase the brand. Therefore, a consumer's emotional attachment to a brand may be able to predict their commitment and willingness to make sacrifices to obtain it. Some basic ideals that are associated with this emotional involvement for brands are a positive brand attitude, high involvement in the product category, brand loyalty (willingness to pay a premium), affection, passion, connection, and the overall satisfaction associated from the brand (Thompson et al. 2005).

Consumers may face similar environments, but there are several motivating conditions that play a role on brand choice depending on the consumer (Yang et al. 2002). There are several behavioral factors that play a role in determining brand choice for consumers. Product usage is among one of these factors and plays a major influential role in impacting consumer behavior (Ram and Jung, 1989). Product usage consists of two dimensions: usage variety and usage frequency (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Variety usage is how the product is used and depends upon the product category and situation. Market share for product brands could increase based on an event or situation.

Brand Image

Brand image refers to the schematic memory of a brand. It contains the target market's interpretation of the product's attributes, benefits, usage situations, users and manufacturers, marketer characteristics. It is what we think of and feel when we hear of see a brand name.

One research finding says that "there is clearly no real passion associated with the brand". Another research confirmed that after a number of years of focusing on special promotions and price discounts through coupons, rebates, and sales, major consumer marketers have realized that a focus on establishing and maintaining a strong brand image is critical to long-term success. Brand image is on the receiver's side. Image research focuses on the way in which certain groups perceive a product, a brand or a company. The image refers to the way in which groups decode all of the signals emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand.

Brand Preferences

Consumers often analyse the reasons for their brand preferences, either willfully or as a consequence of marketer tactics. For example, some advertisement encourages consumers to think of the reasons they would prefer a particular brand. Several streams of research imply that thinking about attitude should increase the strength of the attitude behaviour link. For example, research based on dual-process models of persuasion indicates that greater cognitive processing of attitude relevant information increases the accessibility of this information, as well as of the attitude itself, which thus increases the possibility that these attitudes will guide behaviour.

Another stream of research based on the effects of accountability suggests that justifying attitudes increases the evaluative consistency of underlying cognitions, which thus bolster the attitude and the link to subsequent behaviour.

Brand equity is the value consumers assign to a brand above and beyond the functional characteristics of the product. Brand equity is nearly synonymous with the reputation of the brand. Brand equity is fragile because it is founded in consumer's beliefs and can be prone to large and sudden shifts outside of management's control because of consumer's exposure to information among other factors.

Customer-based brand equity, which is defined as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand". Although little research directly examines the impact on brand equity, some financial studies show that firms suffer large drops in stock price because of product recalls, including damage to brand equity.

Situation

Situation has been identified as a factor influencing brand choice behaviour. Situation can be defined as all those factors particular to a time and place of observation that do not follow from a knowledge of personnel and stimulus attribute and that have a demonstrable and systematic effect on current behaviour. An explanation of the amounts and the patterns of variance in selected purchase context, this study show sizeable situational influence on brand choice behaviour.

The research has given an increasing amount of attention to habit persistence, state dependence, unobserved heterogeneity in consumer preferences and choice set. Information on consumer's purchase histories and demographic characteristics the purchase environment facing consumers and current choices are available to the analyst modeling choice behaviour. These effects are largely unobservable with scanner-panel data.

Consumer Choice Decision

The way alternatives are presented or framed to and by decision makers can In a market context, decisions have been

framed by altering the consideration set of brands in a choice task. Specifically, low quality brand's evaluations may be framed or altered by the nature and number of brands in an internally or externally general consideration set.

To analyse buyer behaviour one can view buyers as decision makers, consumers have to make many purchasing decisions for satisfying their current of future needs. An average adult makes several decisions daily regarding food, clothing, shelter, transportation, recreation etc., In making these decisions buyer can use many types of decision-making ranging to highly extensive to routine. The decision process used to purchase many products fall somewhere in between these two.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the consumer buying decision of cosmetic products.
2. To ascertain the factors influencing brand choice-cosmetics.
3. To analyse the satisfaction level of the selected consumers and the choice of brand.

Methodology

Cosmetic items namely Lipstick, Nail polish, Eyeliner, Fragrance and Make-up has been selected for the study because they are frequently purchased by female consumers.

Selecting the Brands

For the purpose of the study, five leading brands of cosmetic products were taken, namely Lakme, Revlon, Elite, Avon, and Oriflamme.

Questionnaire Design

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. It was prepared by including various brands and situations. The questionnaire was framed in such a way to find out consumers intention of buying the products, their brand choice behaviour and their brand switching in different situation.

Sample

Sample size was 160 respondents in Chennai city. Respondents are consumers of cosmetics. These consumers belong to different age group, employment status and educational level.

Frame Work of Analysis

The analysis of data consist of the responses collected through the questionnaire has converted into frequencies, percentages and weighted average scores.

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the research objectives, a questionnaire was prepared, the questionnaire had few open ended and mainly comprised of close-ended questions. The finding and interpretation are as follows:

Brand Choice for Cosmetics

In order to find which type of brand the respondents mostly prefer, brand choice is taken as an important variable.

TABLE 1
Brand Choice for Cosmetics

Brand	Lipstick		Nail polish		Eyeliner		Fragrance		Make-up	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Lakme	56	35	45	25	45	28	13	8	59	36
Revlon	48	30	39	22	57	36	50	31	33	21
Elite	31	19	51	28	41	26	34	22	22	25
Avon	14	9	9	5	10	6	53	33	17	11
Oriflamme	11	7	16	10	7	4	10	6	11	
Total	160	100	160	100	160	100	160	100	160	100

The distribution of brand choice is shown Table 1 It shows that 35% of the respondents prefer the brand Lakme for Lipstick then followed by Revlon 30% and Elite 19% whereas Avon (9%) and Oriflamme (7%) are least likely preferred by the respondents.

Respondents prefer the brand Elite 28% for Nail polish followed by Lakme 25% and Revlon 22.8% where as Oriflamme (10%) and Avon (5%) are least likely preferred by the respondents.

Revlon 36% is the brand preferred by the respondents for Eyeliner then followed by Lakme 28% and Elite 26% where as Avon (6%) and Oriflamme (4%) are least likely preferred by the respondents.

In case of Fragrance respondents prefer Avon 33% followed by Revlon 31% and Elite 22%. Whereas Lakme (8%) and Oriflamme (6%) are least likely preferred by the respondents.

In case of Make-up respondents prefer Lakme 36% followed by Elite 25% and Revlon 21% whereas Avon (11%) and Oriflamme (7%) are least likely preferred by the respondents.

Purchase of Cosmetics

The Table 2 gives weighted average score for the cosmetics preferred by the respondents. From the weighted average score we can determine the rank order in which the cosmetics are usually purchased by the respondents.

TABLE 2
Respondent's Intention of Buying Cosmetics in next few Weeks

Cosmetics	Weighted Average Score	Ranking
Eyeliner	2.32	I
Nail polish	2.24	II
Lipstick	2.14	III
Fragrance	1.84	IV
Make-up	1.78	V

The Table 2 shows that most of the respondents have the intention to buy cosmetics in next few weeks. The weighted average score for choosing Eyeliner is 2.32, this shows that they are likely to choose Eyeliner then followed Nail polish 2.24 Lipstick 2.14 Fragrance 1.84 and Make-up 1.78

Brand Loyalty

Consumers prefer the same brand even in different situation. Only a few people changed the brands often.

Table 3
Respondent Using the same Brand

Brand	Frequency	%
Same	111	69
Difference	49	31
Total	160	100

The Table 3 shows the respondents brand loyalty of the cosmetics. It reveals that 69% of the consumers prefer the same brand of cosmetics and remaining 31% consumers prefer different brand according to their preferences.

Brand Preference

Table 4
Respondent's Reasons for Choosing same Brand

Preference	Frequency	%
Reputation of the Company	41	37
Easy availability	36	32
Quality of the product	31	28
Psychological Factor	3	3
Total	111	100

The Table 4 shows the factors which influence the respondents to stick to their original brand. It indicates that 37% of Consumers prefer for the reputation of the company, while 32% of the consumers prefer for the easy availability, and 28% of the consumers prefer on the quality of the product and 3% of the consumers prefer on the psychological factors

Changing of Brands

Consumers having changing attitudes to different brand, often change their brands.

Table 5
Frequency of Changing the Brand

Period	Frequency	%
Once in a month	37	76
Once in six months	7	14
Once in a year	5	10
Total	49	100

The Table 5 shows how frequently the respondents change the brand of cosmetics. It reveals that 76% of the consumers change their brand once in a month, whereas 14% of the consumers change once in six month, followed by 10% respondent change once in a year.

Factors Influencing Brand Choice

In order to find the influence of others on brand choice, factors relating to influence of others were taken into consideration and the factors distribution are shown in the Table 6.

TABLE 6
Influence of Others on Brand Choice

Factors	Frequency	%
Ask for explanation	81	52
Stick to original brand	51	31
Give a second thought	21	13
Immediately change	7	4
Total	160	100

Table 6 gives us a clear idea of the extent to which the consumers' reasons regarding changing their brands, majority of the consumers ask for explanation which constitutes about 52% before changing their brand which 31% of the respondent stick to the original brand, 13% of them give a second thought and 4% of them immediately change to other brand.

Respondents and their Mental Attitudes towards their Brand

To find out how the respondents feel towards their brand, respondents mental attitudes towards the brand is taken into consideration and their distribution are shown in the Table 7.

Table 7
Satisfaction Level of the Consumers

Feeling	Frequency	%
Satisfaction	87	56
Sense of status	57	36
Pleasure	14	8
Total	160	100

Table 7 shows that the underlying psychological factor which have led the consumers to choose their individual brands. The most important feelings associated with the group are satisfaction 56% sense of status 36% followed by pleasure 8%.

Important Elements in Consumer Decision Process

There are many factors which influence respondent's consumer decision process to arrive final purchase decisions. Some of the important factors were taken into consideration and the respondents responses are shown in the Table 8.

Table 8
Factor Influencing on Brand Loyalty

Product Attributes	Frequency	%
Price	64	40
Good quality	57	36
Definite promised results	39	24
Total	160	100

The table 8 indicates that price 40% is the factor that is considered to be an important attribute by the majority of the consumers, then followed by good quality 36% and definite promised results 24%.

Satisfaction Level of the Cosmetics Users

To find the level of satisfaction is must because these levels determines whether the respondents continues the same brand or not. The Table 9 shows the satisfaction level of the respondents regarding the usage of their cosmetics products.

Table 9
Satisfaction with the Brand

Level	Frequency	%
Quite Satisfaction	118	74
Extremely satisfied	31	19
Not Satisfied	11	7
Total	160	100

The Table 9 indicates that 74% of the consumers are quite satisfied with the existing brand they use, while 19% of the consumers are extremely satisfied with the brand they use and 7% of the consumers are not satisfied with the brand they use.

Age Group

Age of the respondents is taken as one of the variable because according to their age purchase pattern will vary.

Table 10
Age Group of Consumers

Age Level	Frequency	%
Below 25	83	52
25-40	56	35
Above 40	21	13
Total	160	100

The respondents were divided into three age groups and the distribution of age are shown in the Table 10. It reveals that out of 160 consumers 52% of them fall in the group less than 25, 35% of them fall in the age group between 25-40 and 13% of them fall in the category above 40.

Employment Status

It is also must to find out whether there is any variations in the frequency of purchase according to employment status is taken into consideration and the distribution of frequency are shown in the Table 11.

Table 11
Employment Status of Consumers

Employment Status	Frequency	%
Employed	91	57
Unemployed	40	25
Professional	17	11
Business women	12	7
Total	160	100

The Table 11 shows that on the total sample, 57% of consumers are employed, 25% of consumers are unemployed, 11% of the respondent are professional and only 7% of the respondent are business women.

Educational Level

To analyse the variation in the education level in the purchasing pattern, education levels were taken into consideration and the distribution of education level are shown in the Table 12.

Table 12
Education Level of Consumers

Education	Frequency	%
College Level	104	71
School Level	29	18
Professional	27	11
Total	160	100

The table 12 indicates that out of the total sample 71% of consumers fall in the category college level, 18% of the consumers fall in the category school level and 11% of the respondent fall in the professional category.

Conclusion

The study reveals the reason for the choice of a selected cosmetic. Lakme is the preferred brand for Lipstick and make-up and Elite brand for Nail Polish. In case of eyeliner the preferred brand is Revlon and for fragrance the preferred brand is Avon. Most of the people prefer the same brand of cosmetics. The consumers consider the quality and price of the product at the time of purchase. The promised result of the product is also one of the factors considered in the decision making process. The consumers are quite satisfied with the existing brand of cosmetic they use. The awareness of the brand to the consumers is influenced by advertisement. Therefore proper advertisement is necessary for promoting the brands for the cosmetics.

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