Cosmetics Purchase Decision : Influence of Brand Awareness and Brand Meaning

Dr. G.H. Kerinab Beenu
Professor - Management Studies,S.A Engineering College, Chennai-77
&
Dr.P.Jayarani
Associate Professor-Commerce, Government Arts College for Men,Nandanan,Chennai-35

Abstract

This study is conducted with the objective of identifying the influence of Brand awareness and brand meaning on cosmetic purchase decision. In India there is ever rising demand for cosmetics due to the high urban population, growth in literacy level, rise in the percentage of women joining work force, Increase in income and disposable income, mass media penetration, influence of western culture and ever green need of people especially women for remaining young and beautiful. This scenario has paved way for the entry of many foreign players into the Indian cosmetic sector. Today, there are brands in the market, which has lead to the situation of brand war among cosmetic marketers.. The product differentiation is on marketing aspect and in brand image building. Whichever company succeeds in capturing the mind share of the customer succeeds in the market. For building brand image for product brand awareness is to be first created and meaning associations are to be made to the brand and it has to be conveyed to the buyers. This study attempts to find if there is relationship between brand awareness and brand meaning on cosmetic purchase decision. Empirical study has been conducted using convenient sampling; the samples were 418 young women residing in Chennai.

Keywords: brand awareness, brand meaning, cosmetic purchase decision.

Introduction

Cosmetic Sector is one of the most lucrative markets which have accommodated many foreign players. The entry of foreign players into cosmetic sector has resulted in plethora for foreign cosmetic brands like Revlon (the first international cosmetics brand to enter India in the mid-nineties), Avon, Burberrys, Calvin Klein, Cartier, Christian Dior, Estee Lauder, Elizabeth Arden, Lancome, Chambor, Coty, Oriflame, L'Oreal, Yardley, Wella, Schwarzkopf, Escada, Nina Ricci, Rochas, Yves St. Laurent, Tommy Hilfiger, Max factor, Max Mara, Shiseido, Body Shop, Maybelline New York, MAC, and many more indigenous brands like Lakme and Ponds . Since there are several brands, product differentiations are established mainly through promotional strategies and Brand image building. This has resulted in Brand war to capture the mind share of the target audience. Cosmetic brand managers adopt commonly understood and culturally embedded beauty standards to convey the targeted audience the desirable images of beauty and cosmetics (Guthrie, Kim and Jung, 2006.). In a study it was found that consumers choose brands in order to reflect social status as well as desired facial image (Wood, 2004). There are several stages in creating a successful product brand. This process include creating and building brand awareness , reaching consumers` minds, and encouraging them to develop a preference for the brand (Keller, 2003). Among the other stages building brand awareness is crucial as brand awareness could lead to the consumer's selecting a product based on the familiarity of the brand (Keller, 2003). This study is attempted to explore the influence of Brand awareness and Brand meaning in Cosmetic Brand decision making.

Review of Literature

"A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol which intended to identify the goods, services of either one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors" (Aaker 1991). "Brand" is defined as the promise of the bundles of attributes that someone buys which provides satisfaction and attributes that make up a brand", (Ambler, 1992).It is seen that brands describe personality of the users with particular lifestyle. It also helps to convey a sense of belonging to a specific social group .

Brand awareness is the ability of the consumer to identify a brand under different conditions (Keller, 2003). This can be in the form of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition assumes prior exposure to the brand. When given a cue, consumers immediately identify the brand as being previously seen or heard. Consumers might recognize many brands but only recall a small number; sometimes even only one brand. Brand recognition is particularly important when a consumer chooses a brand at the point of purchase . Brand recognition is therefore considered as the minimum level of brand awareness and is based on aided recall (Holden, 1993; Laurent et al., 1995; Mariotti, 1999). Whereas,Brand recall is considered the higher level of brand awareness. It relies on unaided recall (Holden, 1993; Laurent et al., 1995; Mariotti, 1999) and relates to the consumer's ability to retrieve the brand from memory when provided with a relevant cue (Ross and Harradine, 2004). The first name or brand that comes to mind has the highest chance of being purchased, as the consumer is not aided by having the name provided, brand recall implies that the brand holds a stronger brand position in mind. The first-named brand, known as Top of mind brand in an unaided recall thus represents the highest level of brand awareness (Laurent et al., 1995; Mariotti, 1999).

Brand awareness is created by making the brand familiar through repeated advertisements, which ultimately results in consumers having "experienced" the brand (Keller, 2003). When consumers have enough experience of the brand by seeing, hearing or thinking about it, the brand will take a strong root in memory and get a position in mind share. Therefore, Advertising is a major path to increased familiarity and brand awareness. The audio visual advertisement helps the brand name enter in the consumer's memory (Keller, 2003).

Brand awareness is also created through the functions performed by brands. Brands has the ability to perform several functions for consumers (Lambin, 2002; Varey, 2002) , for instance, it is a indicator of the product characteristics; help in simplifying decision-making; creates trust, promises superior performance , fulfil a personalisation, reates social or status function, or simply provide satisfaction.

Brand awareness and the Brand decision-making

Knowledge about brands (Brand awareness) influences the decision making process. Blackwell, Miniare and Engel (2006) identified three major variables that shape the decision process such as individual, environmental and psychological influences or processes. Individual influences the most important factor may result from demographics, psychographics, values, and personality. Also, the difference of consumer resources (i.e. time, money, and information reception and processing capabilities) may influence the decision making process. Environmental influences may arise from the differences of culture, social class, the concept of family versus individual and situational factors. The psychological processes would form consumers' information processing, learning behaviour and attitudinal and behavioural changes . Role of Brand awareness in decision making is explained by Blackwell et.al.,that , Brand awareness plays an crucial role in consumer decision-making by influencing which brands enter the consideration set, which of these are used as a heuristic brand, and finally which brands enter the choice list (Macdonald and Sharp, 2000). During

the decision-making process the consumer retrieves, from long-term memory, those products and brands of which she is aware. Consideration set of brands is important, since a brand that is not part of the consideration set is unlikely to be chosen (Mowen and Minor, 2001). A strong relationship does exist between the level of brand awareness and the purchase decision (Woodside and Wilson, 1985). The more easily the consumer recalls the brand in an unaided recall situation, the higher the purchase intention and the more likely the purchase of the brand. In other words, top-of-mind brands have the highest possibility of purchase. Consumers do not always spend a great deal of time or cognitive effort in making purchase decisions. The decision-making process is further simplified by a brand's quality. High perceived quality is said to drive a consumer to prefer one brand over competing brands. Consumers' perception of quality is sometimes based on the belief that "if he/she is familiar with the brand, the organisation must have spent heavily on advertising. If the organisation spends a lot on advertising, it must have good profits which means that many consumers are satisfied with the product; therefore the product must be good"(Macdonald and Sharp, 2003).

Brand Meaning and the Brand decision-making

The brand conveys several meaning to the consumers , it connotes intrinsic and extrinsic value to consumers and enable them to distinguish products by assigning emotional attributes to them (Fournier 1998, Pitta and Franzak 2008), affiliation, and feelings with brands . Keller (2003) suggest that assigning a brand with meaning would actually explain to consumers what a particular product can do for them and how the product is different from the others in the same category. Thus, he strongly believes in relating meaning to brand benefits. Further, Chang and Chieng (2006) put brand meaning into the purview of other brand terms and strongly believed that brand meaning to be linked to brand awareness and brand image. Arpita Khare (2011) says that Indian society is in a transition phase a collectivist society to an individualist society . It was found that Indian youth may appear to endorse Western values, but family traditions, group values, and national traditions play a pivotal role in determining brand meanings and making purchase decisions.

Methodology

Descriptive research methodology has been adopted to study the influence of Brand awareness and Brand meaning on cosmetic Brands Purchase decision . The area selected for the study is Chennai which is a cosmopolitan city. Primary data was collected from selected sample through well structured questionnaire, while the secondary data collected through online database, periodicals and journals.

Measures
Brand Meaning
The Brand meaning measure was taken with modification from Strizhakova and colleagues (2008) . The scale consisted of a total of 30 items related to brand attributes. It covers items to measure consumers' brand meaning on aspects like quality, self-identity, group identity, status, values, family tradition, and national tradition.

Brand Awareness
The Brand awareness, Brand functions and Brand decision making measures were taken from (Radder and Huang, 2008). There were 41 items in the questionnaire. The 5-point Likert's scale was used for responses, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree.

Sample

The samples were young women in the age group of 18-36. The Questionnaire was administered to 418 young women in the above age group. The samples were mostly students and working women, convenient sampling technique was used to collect 418 samples.

Analysis and Findings
Descriptive analysis

The data collected from 418 young women had no deficiencies . 258(62%) women were in the age group of 18-25 and 160 (38%) were in the age group of 26-35. 32% of the respondents were married and 68% unmarried.44% were employed, 47% college students and 9% were housewives. Most of the respondents resided in urban metro (70%) .

Factor Analysis

Brand awareness measuring 13 items (Radder and Huang, 2008)and Brand meaning measuring 17 items (Strizhakova and colleagues 2008) were factor analysed using Principal component analysis, Varimax rotation of .4 scores. The examination of scree plot of eigen values suggested 5 factors. These 5 factor's influence on Cosmetic Brand decision making was further analysed. The second factor analysis was done on brand decision making 10 items (Radder and Huang, 2008). The examination of Scree plot of eigen values suggested 2 factors. The items and their percentage of variance are given below for Brand Awareness and Brand Meaning.

TABLE No:1 Factor Analysis of Brand Awareness &Brand Meaning

Statement	% variance explained
Independent Variable: **Factor 1: Value Expressive**	31.837
Factor 2: Brand Function	11.05%
Factor 3: Brand Knowledge	9.46%
Factor 4: Mass media & In store Advertisement	5.26%
Factor 5: Print Media Advertisement	4.85%

The exploratory factor Analysis identifies five factors of Brand awareness and brand meaning. All the items were loaded more than .4. The KMO value is .889 and percentage of variance explained is 62.46% . The overall Reliability value is .**871**

Table 2: Factor Analysis of Cosmetic Brand Decision Making

Statement	% variance explained
Dependent Variables: **Factor 1:Brand Preference**	43.70%
Factor 2: Brand Recognition	14.15%

The exploratory factor Analysis identified two factors of Cosmetic Brand decision Making.All the items were loaded with more than .4. The KMO value is .801 and percentage of variance explained is 57.85% . The overall Reliability value is .812

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1a &1b: There is a positive influence of Value Expression on Brand preference and brand recognition

Hypothesis 2a &2b: There is a positive influence of Brand Knowledge on Brand preference and brand recognition

Hypothesis 3a &3b: There is a positive influence of Brand Function on Brand preference and brand recognition

Hypothesis 4a&4b: There is a positive influence of Print Media advertisement on Brand preference and brand recognition

Hypothesis 5a& 5b: There is a positive influence of Mass media & In store Advertisement on Brand preference and brand recognition

Path Analysis

Using Structural equation modelling (SEM) the relationship between Brand awareness, brand meaning and cosmetic brand purchase decision were tested. It is observed that Brand Preference and Brand Recognition as latent endogenous (Dependent) variables and Value Expression, Brand Function, Brand Knowledge Mass Media & Instore Advertisement and Print Media Advertisement are considered as latent exogenous (Independent) variables. The hypothesis formulated as above were tested using path analysis(SEM). Only significant variables are used to build the final model and it is provided in the Table below:

We observed that the model fit indices chi-square / df, is more than 2 but less than the recommended guideline value 5, Goodness of Fit Index, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, Comparative Fit Index, Normed Fit Index, Relative Fit Index, Incremental Fit Index and Tucker Levis Index have perfectly satisfied the given recommended guideline values and also the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is less than 0.05. Based on all fit indices the proposed model as in the Diagram is accepted. Hence it is concluded that the derived model has a high explanatory power in terms of describing the interrelationship among the latent exogenous and latent endogenous constructs.. The paths from Mass media & instore advertisement to Brand Recognition and Brand preference were not significant therefore for the sake of model fit the independent variable "Mass media & Instore advertisement", is removed from the SEM Analysis . The influence of Brand Function on Brand Recognition and Print media advertisement on Brand preference were not significant therefore these two path were also removed from the Diagram . Second model Path analysis was done. Only the p values that are highly significant are displayed in the following Table .3

Table:3 Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand Preference	<---	Value Expressive	.321	.052	6.213	***
Brand Preference	<---	Brand Function	.279	.084	3.320	***
Brand Preference	<---	Brand Knowledge	.741	.117	6.346	***
Brand Recognition	<---	Value Expressive	.281	.060	4.666	***
Brand Recognition	<---	Brand Knowledge	.586	.097	6.054	***
Brand Recognition	<---	Print Media Advertisement	.096	.044	2.199	.028

From the above table, the significance values of value Expressive, Brand Function and Brand Knowledge 0.000 is less than 0.01 which are significant at 1 % level. Hence it is concluded that these variables are positively influencing Brand Preference. Out of three factors, the Brand Knowledge is the most influencing factor on Brand Preference, the second most influencing factor is Value Expressive and least one is Brand Function.

The significance values of Value Expressive, Brand Knowledge 0.000 are less than 0.01 which are significant at 1 % level. The print media advertisement significance value 0.028 is less than 0.05 which is significant at 5 % level. Out of three factors namely Value Expressive, Brand Knowledge and Print Media Advertisement, the Brand Knowledge has high influences on Brand Recognition, the second more influencing factor is Value Expressive on Brand Recognition and least one is Print Media Advertisement. Hence it is concluded that the following conceptually framed hypotheses are proved that they have influence on the dependent variables.

Hypothesis 1a &1b: There is a positive influence of Value Expression on Brand preference and brand recognition
Hypothesis 2a &2b: There is a positive influence of Brand Knowledge on Brand preference and brand recognition
Hypothesis 3a: There is a positive influence of Brand Function on Brand preference
Hypothesis 4b: There is a positive influence of Print media advertisement on brand recognition.

Conclusion and Marketing implications
        The study identified that the brand meaning factors: Value expressive and Brand Knowledge influence the purchase decision factors: Brand preference and Brand recognition significantly. It implies that Brand meaning influences cosmetic brand purchase decision significantly. It was supported earlier in a study that a brand becomes more meaningful when it has more cognitive and affective experience-based associations. With the experience, many types of meanings are associated to a brand, which results in higher awareness and a higher recall rate in various purchase situations (Ivana First 2009). Therefore the brand managers shall focus on brand meaning by creating more meaningful brand experiences for their customers and make them associate attributes to brands and use it while making purchase decision.
        Brand awareness factor Brand Function has influence on Brand preference but not on Brand recognition, while Print media advertisement affects Brand recognition but not the Brand preference while making purchase decision. Therefore Brand function and Print media advertisement partially influences cosmetic brand purchase decision. Mass media & Instore advertisement did not influence purchase decision significantly. It could be because most of the respondents are young college going women residing in urban area, beauty conscious , shrewd and buy cosmetics only after knowing about the product very well . In order to gain in depth knowledge about cosmetic products and its attributes they trust on newspapers and magazines particularly women magazines.
         Therefore, brand managers are advised to invest in creating brand awareness through print media advertisement and by creating positive perception about the various functions the brand could perform, to their consumers especially young women. As a result consumers can expand their brand association, become more connected to the cosmetic brand and use it more often. This will result in increased profits for the companies which own the brands.

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