



FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASE INTENTION ON COSMETIC PRODUCTS OF FEMALE CONSUMERS IN YANGON, MYANMAR

Santhaya Kittikowit^{1*}, Kittiya Suwanabubpa², Sophat Sithisomwong³

Chulalongkorn Business School, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Abstract

Since its economic liberalization in 2012, there has been continuous economic and social development in Myanmar. People, especially city dwellers, are receptive to the foreign and modernized cultures, causing the evolving shift in lifestyle and values. Increase in purchasing power as a result of higher disposable income including higher personal care and beauty consciousness lead consumers to higher attention to personal care and beauty products. As a result, this industry has been enjoying robust growth. However, most cosmetic products seen in the market are imported from overseas, especially from Thailand. As Yangon is a very promising consumer market, it is consequently rather highly competitive. The researcher was then interested in studying the factors influencing purchase intention of female consumers aged 20-60 years old. The objectives of the study are 1.) to explore the current situation of cosmetic industry in Yangon 2.) to identify factors influencing purchase intention and 3.) to provide recommendations to cosmetics exporters or any interested parties. The research analysis was conducted based on the information from consumer and a business operator interviews as well as the subsequent quantitative data acquired from 315 survey respondents during August - October 2017. According to the research findings, brand, quality and price of a product, including social influence all have influence on purchase intention. Moreover, country of origin also has an influence on perceived quality among consumers. Recommendations based on research result interpretation are to develop value for money products for which quality is the primary focus, to formulate effective branding and marketing strategies deploying social influence as one of the strategic communication channels.

Keywords: *Purchase Intention, Cosmetic Products, Yangon Myanmar, Social Influence, Country of Origin*

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Study

Culturally, the lifestyle of the people in Myanmar, especially those living in the urbanized areas, has substantially been westernized as a result of globalization, trade liberalization and end of economic sanctions. These citizens are exposed more to the outside world, bombarded with myriad of products and services offered from international brands when

they, especially young citizens, are also willing to embrace the new westernized lifestyle since their purchasing power, considered from higher income, is also greater than it was in the past.

Young population and higher disposable income, cosmetics has also been one of the fast growing industries in Myanmar as more and more women, especially those having stable jobs, regular income are seeking for western, modernized and better quality cosmetics, shifting away from using just only plain cosmetics in basic colors or just their traditional Thanaka, to nurture their skin and enhance their look. As a result, there is a constant rise in demand, as shown in Figure 1, especially in urban cities like Yangon. Seeing this prospect, many international and multinational players mainly from South Korea, China, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Europe and The United

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Email Addresses:

santhaya@cbs.chula.ac.th (Santhaya Kittikowit)

kittiya.gks@gmail.com (Kittiya Suwanabubpa)

sopha.sithisomwong@gmail.com (Sopha

Sithisomwong)

*Corresponding author

States wanted to enter Myanmar to preempt early mover advantages and gain customer's loyalty, resulting in various choices of international cosmetic products currently available in the market through modern-trade retail stores in both department stores and even stand-alone shops. Despite the constant rise in demand, local production proficiency is still insufficient to manufacture and supply cosmetic products for domestic consumption, causing Myanmar to rely heavily on importation which is expected to be continuously increasing every year.

Among the international players in the market, Thailand is the biggest cosmetics exporting country to Myanmar thanks to many competitive advantages such as proximity of the country location, low import taxes as an ASEAN member country, good perception toward the product quality among Myanmar consumers. As mentioned earlier, 50 percent of the total imports were from Thailand in 2011.

In order to establish a foothold in the market, players are competing with their products and marketing strategies to attract consumers. Therefore, it is essential to know what can trigger or stimulate the needs and intention to buy among the target consumers or what business operators can leverage in their product and marketing strategies in order to respond to those needs or preferences of their segment. With accurate market insight and streamlined strategies, a player that is able to swiftly respond precisely to consumer's needs is likely to build a favorable customer experience and relationship with their brand, eventually leading to customer's loyalty which is considered one of the sustainable competitive advantages in doing business, especially for cosmetics industry.

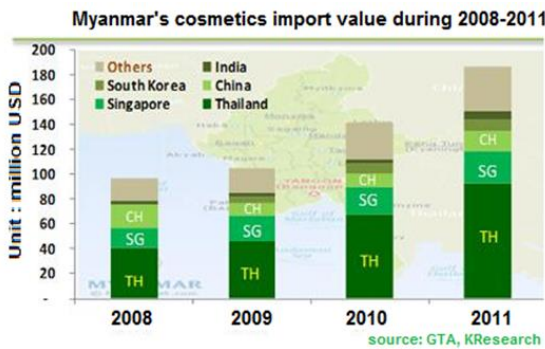


Figure 1. Myanmar's cosmetics import value during 2008-2011.

According to Nielsen Emerging Market Insights Report conducted in 2014 presented in Figure 2, approximate 47 percent of Myanmar's monthly household expenditure was spent on FMCG sector, 6 percent of which was spent on personal care products. This reflects Myanmar consumer's enthusiasm in personal care and beauty, contributing to prospecting demand in such product.

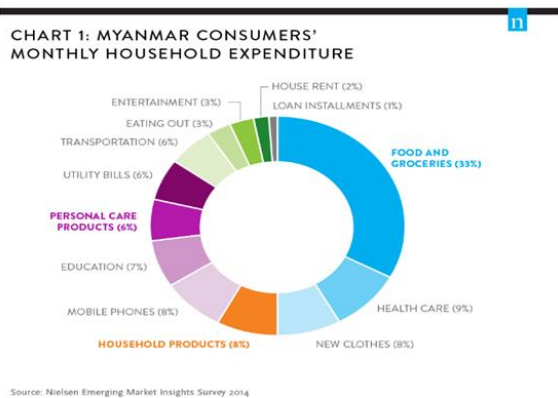


Figure 2. Myanmar consumers' monthly household expenditure

This study objectives are to explore the current situation of cosmetics industry as well as the perceptions and attitudes of the consumers towards cosmetics, to identify what can be factors influencing purchase intention which can lead to purchase decision on cosmetics among consumers and to provide recommendations to any cosmetics exporters for their marketing strategies in order to be successful in establishing foothold and to be competitive in Yangon. While the target respondents are women living in Yangon aged between 20-60 years old; the ages at which women usually use cosmetics and have certain purchasing power. The location is Yangon because it is one of the major cities in Myanmar which is populated by middle class such as white-collar workers or government workers whose purchasing power and demand for cosmetic products are higher than other areas in the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Cosmetics

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which regulates cosmetics in the United States, [1] defines cosmetics as products "intended to be applied to the human body for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance without affecting the body's structure or functions." (Lewis, 1998)

Cosmetics are essentially used on ground of three goals basis, namely: 1) to enhance personal appeal through decoration of the body; 2) to camouflage flaws in the integument; and 3) to alter or improve upon natures (Milstein, Bailey & Halper, 2001).

Kim & Chung, (2011) cited that consumption of personal care products is a purchasing behavior that satisfies one's needs for beauty and care of one's general appearance.

Therefore, cosmetics products in this research are scoped only to those cosmetic products in general perception which is used to satisfy ones' need for beauty and appearance enhancement, namely all kinds of make-up applied to face, hair and skin such as lipstick, mascara, eye shadow, foundation, brush-on, highlighter, hairstyling products, perfume and cologne, including skin- nurturing products like facial and body lotion, anti-aging or whitening cream and lotion while excluding basic personal care products used for personal hygiene such as shampoo, soap and toothpaste mainly due to difference in purpose and necessity of use.

Consumer Purchase Decision Process, Purchase Intention and Purchase Decision

The term consumer purchase decision (also known as consumer buying decision or consumer decision making process) is defined as the process of a person who has specific needs then took after with steps taken to satisfy those requirements. (Violani & Liswandi, 2016) or the process used by consumers regarding market transactions before, during, and after the purchase of a good or service. (Nicosia, 1966)

The purchase decision process is theoretically simplified into general five forward-moving stages namely; problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-

purchase behavior. In this theory of decision making process, only stage three (evaluation of alternatives) and four (purchase decision) are focused in this research to identify the determinants playing roles in evaluation of alternatives which eventually leads to purchase decision. (See Figure 3)

The third stage is evaluation of alternatives where a person assesses the gathered information and makes a final judgment of the most preferred brand based on endogenous and exogenous variables. Simultaneously, a purchase intention is created. And stage four, purchase decision, is the stage when a person commits to execute the purchase intention. However, it is also important to note that purchase intention is not considered as absolutely reliable predictor of actual purchase since there are two general intervening factors between the purchase intention and purchase decision (Keller, Manceau, Hémonnet-Goujot & Kotler, 2015) which are attitude of others, especially that of friends, relatives or family, that are probably against the person's original attitude and decision and unanticipated situational factors such as abrupt financial constraint, time constraint or other emergencies that may erupt to change the purchase intention.

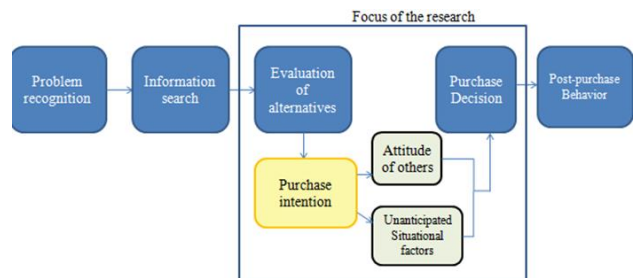


Figure 3. Focus of Research

Determinants of Purchase Intention

The most commonly cited variable used to measure the factors affecting purchase intention are *brand awareness, perceived quality, perceived price and social influences*. Anyway, social Influence is commonly deployed in the research conducted among Asian consumers (Zahid & Dastane, 2016).

Brand awareness.

Brand awareness is used to measure the accessibility of the brand in consumer memory, and it constitutes of all kinds of

brand associations or anything linked in memory of the brand (Aaker, 2009), namely:

- Brand recalling; consumers can remember or recall the exact brand name whenever they notice a product in its category. (Zahid & Dastane, 2016) or consumer can name the first brand of (category) that comes to mind. (Nicholls, Roslow & Dubliss, 1999)
- Brand recognition; the extent to which the general public is able to identify a brand by its attributes or consumer ability to recognize a brand when there is a brand sign. (Zahid & Dastane, 2016)
- Brand image; the consumer's perceptions of the brand's tangible and in tangible associations (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001) or the current view of consumers about the brand.
- Brand attribute; the tangible and intangible features and physical characteristic of the brand (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001)
- Brand personality; the set of human characteristics associated with the brand (Aaker, 1997)
- Brand knowledge; personal meaning about a brand stored in consumer memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information. (Keller, 2003)

Previous study investigated the link between brand awareness and purchase intention and decision and revealed the positive influence brand awareness has on purchase intention and decision.

This emphasizes the influence of cosmetics brands in consumers' product evaluation and purchase decision making. With the findings of these previous research focusing on consumers in developing countries, this hypothesis is developed;

H1. Brand has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon.

Perceived quality.

Perceived quality is consumer subjective decision and judgment on a particular product quality which can vary from the actual quality possibly due to earlier poor product image or unsatisfactory experience, different views of producer and consumer judgment in the scope of quality and insufficient knowledge of consumer to assess a product. this hypothesis is developed;

H2. Perceived quality has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon.

Country of Origin Effect (COE)

Country of Origin Effect is cited in Elliott and Cameron (1994) that it is any influence, positive or negative, that the country of manufacture might have on the consumer's choice processes or subsequent behavior. Hsu, Chang and Yansritakul, (2017) claimed that numerous previous studies have confirmed that the COO of a product affects consumers' evaluations and purchase decisions and their findings itself also supported this statement. Due to the aforementioned information, this hypothesis is developed in order to prove its validity on the effect of COO on perceived quality;

H3. Country of origin has a significant positive influence on perceived quality of female consumers in Yangon when evaluating cosmetic product alternatives.

Perceived price.

Price has demonstrated its significant impact on consumers' evaluation of product alternatives and their final purchase decision. However, value for money is subjective and can vary by each individual's perspective. In other words, perceived price can be influential to consumers' evaluation of alternatives in two ways depending on the degree of their price and quality consciousness.

Based on these findings, this hypothesis is developed;

H4. Perceived price has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon.

Social influence.

Social influence setting is defined as social pressure on consumer from significant others such as friends, family including friends on social media (Zahid & Dastane, 2016). It can be referred as subjective norm or social pressure in the theory of planned behavior (TPB) that links to purchase intention creation. Hence, this hypothesis is developed;

H5. Social influence has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon.

The Conceptual Framework

Adapted from the theory of consumer decision-making and theory of planned behavior (TPB), the relationship between aforementioned determinants, purchase intention and purchase behavior are depicted in the Figure 4.

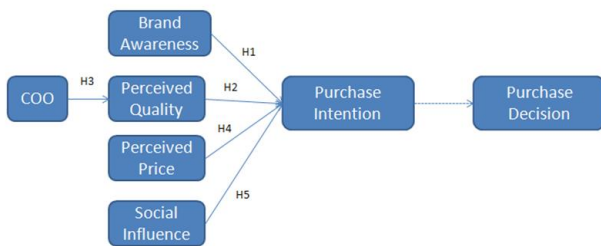


Figure 4. The conceptual framework

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population

The population of this study is women living in Yangon, Myanmar. The target age is the working age which is for 20-60 years old as women in these ages normally use cosmetics to beautify and enhance their appearance either for work or for personal desire. They are assumed to have experience in using cosmetics or at least have an interest to use ones and expected to be the decision makers upon purchase for their personal use. The target sample size for this study is set at 400. However, due to the constraints of time and location, the total number of survey participants eventually ends at 329, giving 315 valid respondents.

Research Instrument

This research is conducted in 2 stages; an exploratory research design (qualitative approach) at the initial stage and a descriptive

research design (quantitative approach) at the second stage.

Due to very few information about the cosmetics industry in Myanmar available on the Internet, the researcher took a trip to Yangon, Myanmar to gain certain data about the current market situation by observing cosmetics shops, stands and shelves of various brands and consumers in department stores and standalone beauty shops (i.e. Beauty Diary) to explore major players in the market, consumer behavior at point of purchase, enthusiasm among consumer toward cosmetic products, marketing communication channels and marketing activities of certain brands.

Moreover, primary data are collected in this stage using qualitative approach by setting up individual interviews with 6 female consumers at point of purchase and their workplaces to verify the previously identified determinants of purchase intention and factors that affect their purchase decision, including consumer preferences, perceptions, cosmetic use and purchase patterns.

Furthermore, an individual in-depth interview with the owner of the only local cosmetics brand in the market at the time when this research is conducted is arranged to acquire the market information, the industry trend and consumer behaviors and preferences from her business experience and point of view, getting insight information from the business operator side. The obtained qualitative data from these consumers and a business operator interviews are used to be the basis of survey questions scheduled to be developed the next stage of the research process.

The second stage: In this stage, the research is conducted by using questionnaire as a research instrument. The data are collected quantitatively through questionnaires. 250 self-administered surveys are distributed to female consumers at department stores, Yangon University, in front of office buildings and other public areas while 70 responses are gathered from female respondents participating on online platform, the survey results are used to test the set hypotheses as well as to describe the consumer attitude, perceptions and behaviors on the concerned variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Consumer Interview

Quality comes first, followed by brand. Anyway, Price also takes into consideration. International brands are preferred and linked with quality. Discounted price or promotion attract buying decision.

Demographic Analysis

Gender – 100% female

Age – 45% 20-30 yrs old, followed by 31-40 (41%)

Occupation – 68% business employee and 19% government official

Monthly Income – 78% earns USD 100-400 a month

Education – 52% local bachelor degree, followed by 38% local master degree

Consumer behavior related to cosmetics usage and purchase intention

Cosmetic usage frequency – 29% every day and 62% almost every day regardless of age group

Average spending per one purchase – 68% spend within 5-20 USD for middle to low monthly income

Factors when purchase cosmetics

Consumers concern on quality (35%), regardless of age group and monthly income, then brand (18%), price (16%).

Quality relates with the expected benefit. Make your skin brighter comes first (17%) followed by moister your skin (14%). However, for older age group, skin brightening come first, then anti-aging or wrinkle free is concerned.

Country of Origin

With regard to the importance of country of origin and the preference to international brands over a local one, the results go positively to the same direction which is 'agree'. To clarify, the respondents agree with the statement that '*country of origin of a product is important to me.*' and believe that cosmetic products from overseas origins offer guaranteed better quality over those from a local brand. In addition, they also agree that they prefer cosmetic products from international brands. These results are in line with the results from the previous descriptive analysis of the brands they are familiar with and favorite countries of origins.

Brand

Most familiar brands are Revlon, L'Oréal, and Maybelline due to heavy advertising and friend recommendation. Advertising has influence on younger age group, while friend recommendation got on older age group.

Social Influence

In term of social influence, the respondents were asked if they look for or rely on reviews, recommendations and information of a product from others prior to making a purchase decision. 82.5 percent or 260 persons always look for the reviews and recommendation while 16.2 percent sometimes do it. Only 1.3 percent or 4 persons do not. The average reviews or recommendations they search are mostly 2-5 reviews equivalent to 58.1 percent. The second largest group or 24.4 percent looks for even more than 6-10 reviews. 11.7 of the respondents look for only 1 review before making a purchase decision while 4.4 percent of them may look for more than 10 reviews. In addition, the source of review, recommendation and information about a product is mostly from beauty advisors at points of purchase at 46 percent, followed by friends and family at 29.5 percent. Bloggers or online reviews equal to 14 percent and product and company websites is at 10.5 percent.

Hypothesis Analysis

H1. Brand has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.

H2. Perceived quality has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.

H3. Country of origin has a significant positive influence on perceived quality of female consumers in Yangon was supported.

H4. Perceived price has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.

H5. Social influence has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.

Inferential Statistic for Hypothesis Testing

Correlation coefficient analysis.

In this section, inferential statistics is employed to investigate the relationship

between independent variable (purchase intention) and dependent variables (brand, perceived quality, perceived price and social influence). Specifically, multiple regression is used to test the relationship between brand, perceived quality, perceived price and social influence to purchase intention.

However, prior to the regression analysis, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis is applied in order to detect multicollinearity among variables to ensure there is no relationship so strong that can possibly distort the result of multiple linear regression (Hair Jr., Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995).

Table 1. *Pearson Correlation Coefficient*

Pearson Correlation Coefficient						
Variable		Purchase Intention	Perceived Quality	Social Influence	Brand	Perceived Price
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation		.404**	.478**	.427**	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
Perceived Quality	Pearson Correlation	.404**		.378**	.535**	.172**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.002
Social Influence	Pearson Correlation	.478**	.378**		.284**	.370**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
Brand	Pearson Correlation	.427**	.535**	.284**		.192**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.001
Perceived Price	Pearson Correlation	.507**	.172**	.370**	.192**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.000	.001	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 1, the result of p-value obtained from Pearson Correlation Analysis at lower than 0.01 indicates the positive correlation among each variable at 0.01 significant level. Moreover, correlation coefficient values range from 0.172 to 0.535, not exceeding the value of 0.90, the value cited by Mela & Kopalle (2002) as one of the thresholds of bivariate correlations for the harmful effect of collinearity. Hence, the test ensures no multicollinearity among tested variables and the analysis result from multiple regression is justified.

The analysis of the relationship between each independent variables and purchase intention.

After correlation coefficient analysis, multiple linear regression is employed to investigate the relationship between each variable to purchase intention. The 4 (four) independent variables namely Perceived Quality, Social Influence, Brand and Perceived Price are investigated as the predictors of the purchase intention. Based on the model summary in Table 2, The R-square value equals to 0.355 which reflects 35.5 percent of the variance of purchase intention is influenced by these independent variables. The p-value of F-test affirms the regression model is significantly predicted by at least one construct (F = 42.648, p-value = 0.000).

Table 2. *Model Summary*

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.596 ^a	.355	.347	.40327	
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	27.743	4	6.936	42.648	.000 ^b

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Quality, Social Influence, Brand, Perceived Price

The beta correlation and p-value presented in Table 3 are used to test the set hypothesis 1, 2, 4 and 5 for a positive influence Brand,

Perceived Quality, Perceived Price and Social Influence have on Purchase Intention respectively.

Table 3. *The Relationship between each Variable to Purchase Intention*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P-value.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	.781	.224		3.479	.001	.339	1.222		
Perceived Quality	.152	.056	.154	2.724	.007	.042	.263	.651	1.537
Social Influence	.319	.055	.303	5.835	.000	.211	.426	.770	1.298
Brand	.267	.059	.245	4.508	.000	.151	.384	.704	1.420
Perceived Price	.161	.049	.158	3.290	.001	.065	.257	.902	1.109

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

The relationship between brand and purchase intention.

According to Table 4.3, p-value of 0.000, less than significant level of 0.05 reflects the significant relationship between brand and purchase intention. Furthermore, the beta correlation is positive (Beta = 0.245), which indicates it is a positive relationship. Therefore, **H1. Brand has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.**

The relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention.

Similarly, to Brand, p-value of 0.007, less than significant level of 0.05 reflects the significant relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention. The beta correlation is positive (Beta = 0.154), which indicates it is a positive relationship. Hence, **H2. Perceived quality has a significant**

positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.

The relationship between perceived price and purchase intention.

In case of perceived price, p-value of 0.001, less than significant level of 0.05 presents the significant relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention. Also, the positive beta correlation (Beta = 0.158) indicates it is a positive relationship. As a result, **H4. Perceived price has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.**

The relationship between social influence and purchase intention.

With regards to social influence, p-value of 0.000, less than significant level of 0.05 shows the significant relationship between social influence and purchase intention.

Moreover, the positive beta correlation (Beta = 0.303) proves it is a positive relationship. Consequently, ***H5. Social influence has a significant positive influence on cosmetics purchase intention of female consumers in Yangon was supported.***

According to Beta value considered as the indicator of level of impact each independent variable has on the dependent variable (purchase intention), the highest Beta is that of social influence, followed by those of brand, price and quality respectively.

The analysis of the relationship between countries of origin to perceived quality

The relationship between countries of origin to perceived quality is tested using simple linear regression to investigate the relationship between these 2 variables. According to Table 4.4, the P-value of 0.000 at the significance level of 0.01 shows the positive correlation between Perceived Quality and Country of Origin.

Table 4. *Pearson Correlation Coefficient between COO and Perceived Quality*

Pearson Correlation Coefficient between COO and Perceived Quality		
Variable		COO
Perceived Quality	Pearson Correlation	.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the result from simple linear regression presented in Table 5, p-value of 0.000, less than significant level of 0.05 shows the significant relationship between country of origin and perceived quality. Moreover, the positive beta correlation (Beta

= 0.316) indicates a positive relationship. Pursuant to this result, ***H3. Country of origin has a significant positive influence on perceived quality of female consumers in Yangon was supported.***

Table 5. *The Relationship between country of origin and perceived quality*

The Relationship between country of origin and perceived quality									
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P-value	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	2.184	.174		12.547	.000	1.841	2.526		
COO	.272	.046	.316	5.903	.000	.182	.363	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Quality

CONCLUSIONS

Cosmetic Industry in Yangon

Cosmetic industry in Yangon is currently competitive with many brands, almost all of them from international origins. Despite increasing presence of various cosmetics brands in Yangon, there is still a market gap for the majority of its people, the poor, many of whom

still cannot afford branded cosmetics and has to purchase fake or low quality products from grey market.

Consumer Behavior

Women in Yangon are really receptive and enthusiastic with cosmetic products. They have increasing beauty consciousness and higher

desire for personal care. Based on the data obtained from the interview and survey, most of female consumers wear make-up quite often or more than 3-7 days a week regardless of their ages. Despite frequent cosmetics use, they do not purchase cosmetics that often, but mostly only twice a year. Growing number of consumers are quality conscious and value quality over price. They are looking for a product that is harmless and compatible with their skin.

Factors Considered for Product Evaluation and Purchase Decision

Brand, quality, price and social influence can all influence consumer purchase intention. However, purchase intention cannot always lead to actual purchase due to the possible blocking factors such as high price and unnecessary of such a product.

They believe products from international brands are more reliable and better in quality. Brand and quality are highly associated in their perception. Once they are satisfied or have a pleasant experience with any brand, they are likely to become brand loyal and quite cautious and reluctant to try new products from unknown brands.

In term of perceived quality, the investigated variables of perceived product quality in this research include product benefit, product design and packaging. Among these variables, product benefit is the most crucial part in consumer opinions while design and packaging are not as equally important as product benefits and product safety.

Perceived price is also undeniably underlying factor to determine buying decision. Most female consumers in Myanmar do not look for the cheapest product to buy. Instead, they are looking for something value for money. In other words, they are willing to pay more in order to get a better-quality product.

Discussion

In this part, the findings of this research will be comparatively discussed with related theories and the findings of certain preceding literature associated with purchase intention. The thematic theory of this research to be discussed is consumer decision making process.

According to the theory of consumer decision making process or consumer purchase decision, there are 5 consecutive stages namely problem or need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior. Pertaining to need recognition, a problem or need can be caused by internal or external stimuli (Keller et al., 2015) and social pressure is cited as one of the external stimuli, this is in coherent with the findings that social influence has a positive significant relationship or in other words an impact on purchase intention or the desire to get the product. Moreover, the subsequent stage of information search supported the findings that female consumers in Yangon usually seek for reviews and recommendations before making a purchase decision. It was also cited by Comegys, Hannula and Väisänen (2006) in their research that the most effective information source comes from personal one which is incoherent to the finding in this research that friends and family is the most influential in term of social influence. However, according to this theory the purchase intention is created during product evaluation process on the basis of need, belief and attitude toward each particular product. Variables like quality and price involve in this process conforming to the findings that these 2 variables have a positive significant relationship to the purchase intention. Moreover, at the stage of purchase decision, the theory suggests that there are 2 possible intervening factors; the disagreement from the significant one (opposing attitude of others) and unanticipated situational factors, that deter the actual purchase decision. Based on the finding, the intervening factors are the belief that the product they want to buy is not necessary, the perceived high price as well as the significant ones' disagreement. This mostly complies with the theory while the belief that it is not necessary may stem from attitude of significant others or personal attitude causing weak purchase intention.

To discuss further, perceived price, perceived quality and brand are the sources of attitude toward products while social influence can be regarded as a subjective norm or external stimulus to purchase intention in accordance to the results from hypothesis testing that perceived price, perceived quality, brand and

social influence all have a positive impact on purchase intention.

Discussed one by one, the hypotheses of each variable are statistically supported which are in coherence with the preceding literature to be mentioned as following;

The approved hypothesis that brand awareness has a positive relationship or influence on the purchase intention is in compliance with the findings of Zahid & Dastane (2016) on the purchasing intention for a Smartphone, of Hoyer and Brown (1990) suggesting that that brand awareness serves as a dominant choice tactic among inexperienced consumers presented with a brand-selection task. In addition, the study of Nair & Pillai (2007) on the purchase pattern of cosmetics among consumers in Kerala, India affirms the similar results that consumer is quite brand loyal when it comes to cosmetic product and they receive the information about the brand mostly from advertisement as well as friends and family. To add, this finding also supports the research result of Laroche, Kim & Zhou (1996) on brand familiarity and confidence as determinants of purchase intention.

Similarly, the supported hypothesis that perceived quality, perceived price and social influence have a positive relationship or influence on the purchase intention is the same as those from the study of Zahid & Dastane (2016) on the purchasing intention for a smartphone, Nair & Pillai (2007) on the purchase pattern of cosmetics among consumers in Kerala, India and that of Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin (2017) on the role of perceived quality on the store's brand purchase intention. The same study on perceived quality also suggested that among the consumers with high perceived quality, their purchase intention is not influenced much by price which is in the same way as the questionnaire results of this research that low-price product could possibly cause less confidence in trustworthiness of a product. Therefore, low price does not really attract them to buy.

Regarding the research findings that country of origin has a positive influence on the perceived quality. The finding is aligned with the previous study of White and Cundiff, (1978) on assessing the quality of industrial product and Hsu, Chang and Yansritakul,

(2017) on the moderating effects of country of origin on the purchase intention of green skincare products. However, although Thailand scores the most frequency in term of the favorite country origin associated with the reason of favorability as 'quality', the difference between products genuinely of Thailand and products imported from Thailand where the brands are not genuine Thai should also be considered as it might not be very distinctive in consumers' perception.

Recommendations

Recommendations for product.

Most female consumers in all age groups in Yangon desire to have bright skin. Product must be harmless and compatible with their skin is equally crucial. The language on the packaging and the labels should include local language as well. However, the level of localization should be optimal, not fully localized it since it is more preferable to still sustain the international-look of such a particular product. The preference of natural ingredient is not yet explicit. However, natural ingredients will become an evolving trend especially among premium segment.

Recommendation for price.

Regarding pricing strategy for a cosmetic product, entrepreneurs should not focus on low price strategy. Consumers with certain purchasing power does not look for the cheapest product, they are looking for quality-price balance or value for money which is the price commensurate the efficacy and the effectiveness of a product.

Recommendation for marketing communication.

The popularity of brand can increase purchase intention or purchase preference for one particular brand over the others, conforming to the fact that, in consumer perception, well-known brands are more reliable than the unknown ones and brand is another pivotal factor they consider when purchasing cosmetics. Reliability and credibility are crucial for cosmetics as it is a product involving with individual physical health and some consumers may judge the product quality simply through its brand.

To build brand awareness or making people know the brand can be effectively executed mainly through advertisement, followed by big influencers namely friends and family, attractive point of purchase and beauty advisors and digital influencers such as bloggers or internet peer reviews. Digital media such as social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram or relevant websites are currently a very suitable and effective advertising channel as growing number of Yangon populates, especially youth and young adults are very active social networking users.

According to the statistic result, many consumers may want to purchase or have a cosmetic product but do not eventually buy it mostly because they think it is not necessary. To bridge this gap, marketers should find ways to reiterate the importance of make-up or self-care activities, probably through role models or creating desired personality and appearance for the target group to follow, rather than just emphasizing product benefits.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the sample size owing to the constraints of collection time, place and resources. Consequently, 315 usable survey respondents were acquired instead of the stretch target of 400 respondents. Moreover, considering the demographic information of the respondents, they are rather homogenous in term of age, occupation, education and income. With this fact, it can be assumed that the results can only applicable or represent only one group of female population in Yangon, especially those age 20-40 years old, with the income ranging around \$200-\$300 per month while it may not be sufficient to epitomize those consumers not falling into these groups such as those earning much less or much higher or those older female consumers.

Moreover, this research was conducted only in Yangon or the research frame is geographically limited. The obtained results may not sufficient to represent the entire population in Myanmar.

Another limitation of this research is the language barrier during the individual

interviews as well as the questionnaire which were primarily conducted in English with the help with local interpreters. Therefore, some messages may be lost or misinterpreted during the translation

Recommendations for further studies

As per the limitations stated in previous section, future studies should be encouraged in order to bridge such research gaps. Since the purchase intention of consumers in emerging markets has not yet been much explored in any literature, there should be further studies on such purchase intention for other products in other categories, including a study on the influence from other possible factors such as consumer demographic or marketing strategies. Also, as this research explores each variable like product, price, quality and social influence in general, future studies may be purposed to study these factors further into details of each attribute for more in-depth understanding on the influences and the role they play in consumer decision making process.

In addition, it would also be interesting to study the purchase intention of a specific consumer group such as that of the poor or that of the rich which would be beneficial to any parties interested in doing business in such mentioned segments.

Moreover, this research is conducted only on women who are the main contributor to the sales of beauty industry. However, since the world and life style change, men concern about their appearance more than they did in the past so future studies may consider conducting research on both male and female or specifically on men.

The last recommendation for future study is based on the fact that this research is conduct on the assumption that all purchase decision is always a cognitive process while such buying decision could be impulsive; hence, impulsive buying among consumer in emerging markets such as Myanmar should be further investigated.

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