

The Factors Influencing Chinese Consumers' Purchasing Behaviors Towards Cosmetics Products

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ABSTRACT

With the development of China's economy, people's disposable income has been increased significantly. With the increased disposable income, more and more people choose to purchase cosmetics products. The cosmetic industry has become more competitive than before. In this industry, companies need to better understand their customers' buying behavior and further improve their marketing strategies, thereby increasing company sales and customer loyalty. This research focuses on customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products and aims to analyze the factors influencing customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products.

Moreover, the researcher will put forward some marketing methods for cosmetics companies based on the analysis of purchasing behaviors. Based on the relevant literature, it can be found that factors including brand, celebrity power, product appearance, etc. could influence customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products. This research has further compared the differences in customers' purchasing behaviors between local and international cosmetics brands. Based on the analysis, the researcher suggests conducting in-depth marketing research, improving brand, and utilizing various promotional tools to increase sales and customers' loyalty.

Keywords: *Cosmetics products; Cosmetics brand; Chinese consumers; Purchasing behaviors; Marketing methods*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the proliferation of China's economy and improvements in living standards, people's consumption has become more diversified and their needs for cosmetics products have been increased significantly [1]. The increasing demand for cosmetics products contributes to the growth of the cosmetics industry. China is by far the second-largest cosmetics market in the world after the United States [2]. Therefore, China has a high market potential for cosmetics products and such potential tends to increase continuously. This research focuses on China's cosmetics industry to explore customers' purchasing behaviors and put forward some feasible marketing methods for cosmetics companies to improve their overall marketing performance. Specifically, this research will analyze the factors that influence Chinese customers' purchasing behaviors of cosmetics, and provide corresponding marketing method suggestions to enterprises according to these factors.

The existing research explores the factors that influence customers' purchasing behaviors on cosmetics

products [3]. Since the cosmetics market and customers' needs are changing gradually, the existing findings can be outdated to some extent. In detail, cosmetics brands are upgrading their products and introducing new products regularly. With the increasing number of cosmetics brands and products, the whole market could become more competitive than before. As for customers, they need different types of cosmetics products and they have different preferences towards cosmetics products. Therefore, this research will systematically analyze the relevant literature and draw on secondary data to analyze the factors influencing customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products. Moreover, this research could help cosmetics companies better understand customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products and put forward some marketing methods to improve overall marketing performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Brand

2.1.1. Brand equity

Brand equity is mainly about the value of the brand, and such value is determined by the customers' perception. For example, if customers think a brand is of high value, that brand is also high in brand equity [4]. Luo (2019) claims that the celebrity endorsement advertising frequency could influence the brand equity of idol worshippers and non-idol worshippers. Firstly, brand equity is positively correlated with the frequency of celebrity advertisements that provide online media advertising to consumers [5].

Secondly, different types of Chinese consumers including idol worshippers and non-idol worshippers have different attitudes towards brand equity. In general, among the idolatry consumers in the Chinese market, idolatry consumers are more likely to formulate positive attitudes towards brand equity than non-idolatry consumers [5].

2.1.2. Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty can exert a significant impact on a company's overall marketing performance [6]. There are several ways to improve brand loyalty, such as social media marketing. College students are regarded as an important customer group for cosmetics companies, and most of them obtain product information through social media platforms. Man and Rahman (2019) have explored the impact of social media marketing on Chinese college students' loyalty to cosmetics brands, and their assumptions were confirmed by research data [7].

The amount of information provided by social media content and updated and diverse applications or platforms is positively correlated with college students' brand loyalty [7]. If cosmetics companies can provide college students with more attractive information through social media, then customers will become more loyal to those brands [7]. Meanwhile, the influence of social media marketing on college students can be transformed into their friends and relatives [7]. Therefore, the increasing popularity of cosmetics-related social media platforms can improve companies' brand loyalty [7].

2.1.3 Brand awareness

Brand awareness refers to the degree of customers' recognition of certain products by some of the brand characteristics. In other words, brand awareness measures how recognizable a brand is towards target customers [8]. GILITWALA and NAG (2021) examine the factors that influence the purchasing behaviors of high-end cosmetics products among young Chinese

customers. The data shows that brand awareness does not affect consumers' attitudes toward high-end cosmetics brands. But factors, such as product involvement, perceive quality, subjective norms, and word of mouth, have a significant impact on consumers' attitudes and purchase intention towards high-end cosmetics brands [9].

2.1.4 Brand personality

Brand personality involves a set of unique characteristics attributed to a certain brand. As for companies, they should accurately define their brand personalities so that customers can better understand their brands [10]. There are some studies on the influence of brand personality on Chinese consumers' purchasing decisions. For instance, Kim and Chen (2018) have researched the influence of Korean cosmetics' brand personality on Chinese consumers' brand preferences, and they have four main findings. Firstly, Chinese consumers are aware of the brand personalities of Korean cosmetics brands such as love and excitement [11]. Secondly, Korean cosmetics' brand personalities influence Chinese consumers' purchasing decisions through emotional factors like love and excitement [11]. Thirdly, for the factor of gender, both males and females can be influenced by sincerity. However, excitement is the most influential factor for male customers, while emotion is most influential for female customers [11]. Finally, with regard to the age difference, customers who are younger than 24 are affected by sincerity and excitement, and customers who are aged between 25 and 30 are affected by sincerity, and customers who are older than 31 are affected by affection [11].

2.2. Factors influencing customers' purchasing behaviors on cosmetics

With the development of China's economy, the purchasing power of Chinese consumers was increased significantly. Under such circumstances, the imported cosmetics market is strongly stimulated. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the factors affecting customers' purchasing behaviors in the imported cosmetics market.

2.2.1. Factors influencing customers' purchasing behaviors on imported cosmetics

Recently, imported cosmetics products are becoming increasingly popular among Chinese customers' purchasing behaviors towards imported cosmetics. Sun et al. (2021) have explored the factors influencing Chinese customers' imported cosmetics in recent years. Specifically, they find that celebrity power could positively influence their purchasing behaviors towards imported cosmetics. Sun et al. (2021) argue that customers tend to be attracted by online celebrities' personal charm, their words, and deeds. In response,

these customers tend to become celebrities' fans and follow celebrities' advice to make the relevant purchases. To reduce or avoid uncertainty, consumers refer to sales volume, customer ratings and reviews etc. Consumers will become more cautious, and refer to others' choices and sometimes may rely on others' choices [3].

The second is product appearance. As the main consumers of cosmetics products, women usually prefer cosmetics products with aesthetic characteristics. Therefore, some cosmetics products with elegant appearance, exquisite package, and bright product design are more attractive to consumers. Although the design of cosmetics products may not satisfy customers' needs, such design allows them better understand and experience those products, so as to stimulate their purchase desire to make final purchase [3]. Product appearance is not supplementary to the product, but is regarded as an integral part of the whole product. A successfully designed product appearance can significantly increase the added value of cosmetics products, thereby helping to increase sales [3].

The third is brand culture. Since brand culture is increasingly valued by consumers, it is not only reflected in product function, but also depends on the brands' ability to carry and disseminate their cultural meanings. Consumers like brands with cultural embodiments they are interested in or consistent with their thoughts and ideas. For consumers, entertainment and socializing are the main reasons for making purchase. Brand culture can establish a social atmosphere according to consumers' identity and preferences, so as to satisfy their social experiences [3].

2.2.2. Factors influencing customers' choices of local or international cosmetics

This section will analyze the differences in customers' purchasing behaviors between local and international cosmetics brands. Cai and Nico (2020) analyze the factors influencing customers' purchasing decisions on local and international cosmetics. Their research compares customers' purchasing decisions on Thai and Chinese brands respectively. Comparing Chinese consumers' preferences and purchases on Thai and Chinese cosmetics brands can help to further analyze Chinese consumers' product and brand cognition, brand preferences, and purchasing behaviors [12].

For local and international cosmetics brands, successful implementation of brand strategy can strengthen customers' preferences through brand awareness, product quality, and brand image. With the enhanced customers' preferences towards cosmetics brands, customers can be induced to make purchases on cosmetics products they like [12].

Moreover, domestic knowledge of cosmetics products can exert a significant influence on customers' purchases of Chinese brands. In accordance with the research findings, as for cosmetic manufacturers, the more domestic knowledge on characteristics of local cosmetics brands customers have, the higher preferences they show towards those brands [12].

This research also assumes that various promotional tools and media channels could improve customers' perception of cosmetics product features. In this sense, customers will be more likely to purchase cosmetics products. Chinese customers who have not purchased Thai cosmetics products are more willing to buy Chinese cosmetics than Thai cosmetics. Therefore, some Thai cosmetic manufacturers help customers better understand these products by offering free samples for customers to experience their products [12].

2.3. Male consumers

2.3.1. Male consumers' purchasing behaviors

There are some studies examining male customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products. Zhou and Niyomslip (2021) have explored male customers' purchasing behaviors in the Chinese market, and they have analyzed factors including personality, culture, social factors, and marketing incentives. In terms of the personality factor, men who often make impulse purchases are proved to be more likely to buy male cosmetics products, although there is no significant relationship between impulse purchases and male purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products [13].

Moreover, consumption culture is changing the consumption mentality of today's Chinese young customers. Men also became aware of their appearance and were willing to invest in improving their appearance. Under the influence of such consumption culture, customers will be more likely to make impulsive purchases. However, no significant relationship was found between consumption culture and male buying behaviors [13].

In terms of social factors, other customers like women, friends, and relatives could influence men's purchasing behaviors. Since men tend to have limited knowledge of cosmetics products, they tend to be influenced by others when buying cosmetics products. In other words, there is a significant positive correlation between the reference group and male purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products [13].

In terms of marketing incentives, some relevant information gained from personal networks and social media can attract customers' attention. Other factors like product packages, prices, and marketing incentives are proved to be positively correlated with the male

purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products. Nevertheless, since male customers may not be influenced by the factor of the brand when buying cosmetics products, there is no significant correlation between brand and male purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products [13].

2.3.2. Young male consumers' purchasing behaviors

There are some studies examining factors influencing young Chinese male customers' purchasing intention towards cosmetics products. Chiu et al. (2019) have analyzed the factors including social recognition and social expectation and they argue that these factors can exert a significant impact on the attitudes of male customers, then affect their purchase intention. More importantly, China has a collectivist culture, and social norms and cultural beliefs can positively influence customers' attitudes. Also, word of mouth has a positive impact on both customers' emotions and cognition. Furthermore, personal factors like aesthetic appearance and health conditions can significantly influence young male customers' attitudes towards cosmetics products, which lead to final purchases [14].

2.4. Chinese and foreign consumers

There are some studies examining the purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products between Chinese customers and customers in other countries. Gomes et al. (2020) compare the differences in purchasing behaviors between Chinese and Swiss customers from three aspects [15].

With reference to problem identification, customers from Switzerland and China usually purchase cosmetics products for personal reasons, but sometimes for social and psychological reasons. However, in China, customers choose to purchase cosmetics products due to the influence of others' opinions [15].

With regard to information search, customers tend to search for product information based on their own experiences and other reliable sources. However, in Switzerland and China, customers are reluctant to buy products they haven't tried before. Also, in China, online customer reviews as a source of information are becoming increasingly influential for customers when making purchasing decisions [15].

In terms of actual purchases, customers in Switzerland prefer purchasing cosmetics products in physical stores and their purchasing decisions can be influenced by the sales staff. However, in China, customers rely more on their own judgement. Thus, cosmetics companies need to adopt suitable marketing methods considering different customer preferences [15].

3. ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

This section will analyze the factors that influencing customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products and put forward some marketing methods based on the analysis of these factors.

3.1. Factors

With regard to the factors influencing customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products, Sun (2021), Zhou and Niyomsilp (2021), Cai and Irawan (2020) have found out significant correlations between celebrity power, product appearance, brand culture, personality, marketing incentives and customers' actual purchasing behaviors. Specifically, when shopping online, customers tend to be influenced by celebrities and follow celebrities' advice to make relevant purchases. Moreover, as for the product appearance, although attractive appearance is positively associated with customers' purchasing behaviors, though such influence is not as significant as celebrity power [3][12][13].

Since brand culture is embedded in cosmetics products, it can also influence customers' purchasing behaviors. As for customers who are especially loyal to certain brands, the brand culture could significantly influence their purchasing behaviors. Also, other cultural factors like customs and cultural beliefs etc. could make customers become loyal to certain brands and make relevant purchases. In addition, people have complex social relations with others and their purchasing behaviors can be influenced by these relations in China. Others' recommendations can be especially useful for customers who are not familiar with certain products or have limited information about the products. Thus, the social factors could influence customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products. To sum up, there are various factors including celebrity power, product appearance, culture, and social factors that can influence customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products.

3.2. Marketing methods

This section will introduce the marketing methods for cosmetics companies based on the previous analysis of customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products.

Firstly, as for the whole Chinese cosmetics market, the companies should conduct full-scale marketing research to better understand their customers and needs, so that they can sell appropriate products that suit customers' needs. Specifically, cosmetics companies need to research into customers' usage preferences and their actual needs for cosmetics products. With a better understanding, companies can increase relevant marketing investment focusing on increasing their market

share and sales. Moreover, cosmetics companies can stimulate customers' awareness towards a better appearance. [13]

Secondly, the factor of the brand is especially important for cosmetics companies to enlarge market share and increase sales. Thus, companies need to continuously improve their brand image and increase customers' brand loyalty and stickiness between companies and customers. [7]

Thirdly, cosmetics companies could utilize various promotional tools, like offering free samples and discounts to promote and sell products. Through these promotional tools, there will be more customers choosing to purchase cosmetics products. Meanwhile, these promotion tools can help customers gain better understandings of products, thereby stimulating their interest in buying cosmetics products. Thus, companies need to make effective use of promotional tools to gain better marketing performance. [12]

4. CONCLUSION

This research focuses on analyzing customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products and factors influencing their purchasing behaviors. Also, this research has chosen the Chinese market and analyzed the differences in purchasing behaviors between local and international brands. Specifically, this research has found that factors including brand awareness, brand loyalty, celebrity power, product appearance, and social relations can influence customers' purchasing behaviors to various extents. Thus, cosmetics companies need to conduct in-depth marketing research to gain a better understanding of customers' actual needs and preferences. Also, cosmetics companies need to stimulate customers to form into habits of buying cosmetics products. Moreover, cosmetics companies are advised to utilize various promotional tools to promote their products and attract potential customers to make purchases.

There are some limitations for this research. The analysis of customers' purchasing behaviors towards cosmetics products is mainly based on secondary data like academic literature. Although these data and findings are useful for analyzing customers' purchasing behaviors, the analysis can be in further depth through collecting primary data. Therefore, as for future research, researchers could plan to collect some primary data to conduct some further analysis.

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