RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF BRAND CHARACTERISTICS ON BRAND LOYALTY OF COSMETIC PRODUCTS AMONG THE FEMALE CONSUMERS IN TIRUNELVELI CITY

Dr. Ravi, P. and *Subhalakshmi R.

Department of Management Studies, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, India

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at identifying the factors that influence Brand Loyalty of cosmetic products in Tirunelveli city. Many factors were identified in prior researches such as brand name, product quality, product design, price, store environment, promotion, service quality, expiry date, purchase decision and so on. This study aims at focusing only six major factors that is to say, brand name, product quality, product design, price, store environment and promotion. The population of the study comprises of all female consumers of Tirunelveli city. The sample of 120 female consumers is randomly chosen from important vicinity of the city. The data is collected using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, one way Anova and Pearson correlation are used to analyze the data. The findings signify that the factors brand name, product quality, product design, price and store environment have significant relationship with brand loyalty. The factors product quality and brand name have the highest impact on brand loyalty of cosmetics, whereas price has the lowest impact on it.

INTRODUCTION

According to the report of Times of India (December, 2013), India's retail beauty and cosmetic industry is found to be around $950 million and the growth rate is expected to be at the percentage of 15-20 in the forth coming years. In the last five years, says, Times of India, the sale of cosmetic products has been increased by 60 percent which also includes rural and semi-urban parts of the country. Studies have to be made on this rapidly growing industry with respect to areas such as, service marketing, consumer behavior, supply chain and so on, so as to increase the effective management by the companies serving the industry. Due to the highest level of competition in the market, and due to the fact that cosmetics is a type of Fast Moving Consumer Good products that is of daily consumption, the loyalty of consumers towards a particular brand for years together is an intricate task. This study aims at focusing on this point of view, in identifying the nature of consumer profile and the factors they consider on deciding on the loyalty towards a particular brand of cosmetics.

Review of Literature

The brand loyalty of cosmetic products is influenced by perceived quality, price, promotion, expiry date, purchase decision, brand name, store environment, ingredients and design. This statement was proved statistically and hypothetically by Syeda Faiza Gillani, Shahnila Yousaf and

Corresponding author: Subhalakshmi R.
Department of Management Studies, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, India

Shahzad khan in their research paper, "The effect of Brand Characteristics on Brand Loyalty: A study of cosmetic products in Peshawar Pakistan" in 2013. According to Dr. Hamza Salim Kharim (2011), in his article entitled "The influence of Brand Loyalty on cosmetics buying behavior of UAE female consumers" says that, though all the seven factors: brand name, product quality, price, design, promotion, service quality and store environment have positive and significant relationship towards brand loyalty, the brand name has shown the strong correlation than others. A case study made on brand loyalty of Nivea for men facial wash, by Khanapote Panyachokchai (2013) in Bangkok, was aimed at studying the relationship between brand reputation, satisfaction, personality traits of users, brand personality, trust in terms of benevolence, trust in terms of credibility and brand loyalty among which, trust in terms of credibility had the highest impact on brand loyalty of Nivea. Advertisement serves as a main source in providing information about the brands of cosmetics to consumers, states Dr. Vinith Kumar Nair and Dr. Prakash Pillai R in their article, "A study on purchase pattern of cosmetics among consumers in Kerala" (2007). An article entitled, "Role of customer relationship management in Brand Attitude Formation and its impact on Brand loyalty" by Anita Basalingappa and M.S.Subhas emphasized that, advertisements, past experience and word of mouth have strong impact on Brand attitude formation, CRM strategies for Brand Attitude Formation have positive impacts on Brand loyalty at different stages- Information stage, pre selling stage, purchase stage, usage stage, service stage, support stage and repurchase stage.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows
➢To analyze the demographic profile of the female cosmetic consumers of Tirunelveli city
➢To identify the factors that influence brand loyalty of cosmetic products among female consumers of Tirunelveli city
➢To identify the most important factor of brand loyalty of cosmetics among female consumers of Tirunelveli city

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty involves consistent repurchase of and preference towards a particular brand (Evans, Berma, 2003). According to Harsh.V.Verma (2006), Brand loyalty is the bias (non random), behavioral response (i.e., act of purchase), expressed over time, by some decision making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands and is a function of psychological processes (evaluative decision making). The American Marketing Association defines brand loyalty as: The situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category. In other words, the degree to which the consumer consistently purchases the same brand within a product class.

Factors influencing Brand Loyalty

According to Lau et al. (2006), seven factors were found to influence brand loyalty that is to say, brand name, product quality, product design, price, store environment, service quality and promotion.

Brand Name

Brand Name is a word, letter (number), group of words, or letters (numbers) that can be spoken (Evans, Berma, 2003). In other words, a Brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies the goals and services of a seller or group of sellers (Evans, Berma, 2003).

Product Quality

Harvard professor David Garvin says that, in the point of view of users, "product quality is an individual matter and products that best satisfy their preferences (i.e. perceived quality) are those with the highest quality". He adds, "Quality is viewed as quantifiable and measurable characteristics or attributes".

Product Design

According to Frings (2005), "design is visual appearance, which includes line, shape and details affecting consumer perception toward a brand".

Price

A price represents the value of a good or service for both the seller and the buyer. The value includes both tangible and intangible factor ((Evans, Berma, 2003). According to E.Raymond Corey (1984), Price is an expression of value. In the market place, value often is defined as 'Quality at the right price' (Sinha, 1998).

Store Environment

According to Evans and Berma (2003), there are four basic components of a retailer's atmosphere: exterior, general interior, store layout, interior displays. According to Omar (1999), the most important factor for success of stores is store environment. According to Lovelock (2010), customer assessment and satisfaction include sales person, store environment, temperature, noise, smell, symbol, color and commodity.

Promotion

Promotion is one of the four marketing mix strategies. It includes sales promotion and other promotional strategies. Advertising is any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of a company's offerings by an identified sponsor (Valarie A Zeithml *et al.*, 2008).

HYPOTHESES

This study focuses on the following hypothesis. Here, Brand loyalty is considered as dependent variable and its factors are considered as the independent variables.

H1:   There is significant relationship between brand name and brand loyalty of cosmetics
H2:   There is significant relationship between product quality and brand loyalty of cosmetics
H3:   There is significant relationship between product design and brand loyalty of cosmetics
H4:   There is significant relationship between price and brand loyalty of cosmetics
H5:   There is significant relationship between store environment and brand loyalty of cosmetics
H6:   There is significant relationship between promotion and brand loyalty of cosmetics

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an empirical study based on a structured questionnaire, consisting of factors influencing brand loyalty and their respective items. The constructs are measured using five point Likert scale. The population comprises of all female consumers of cosmetic products in Tirunelveli city. The sample consists of 120 samples from three major areas of the city (Tirunelveli junction, Town, Palayamkottai and Vannarapetttai.) The sample selection is based on random sampling technique The study is descriptive in nature using descriptive statistics, one way Anova and Pearson correlation.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Reliability test

The reliability of each variable in the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha value. Table: 1 shows the nature of

high reliability of the factors of brand loyalty that includes brand name (0.720), product quality (0.699), product design (0.628), price (0.719), store environment (0.852) and promotion (0.880).

Table 1. Reliability test for factors of brand loyalty

Variables	Alpha value
Brand Name	0.720
Product Quality	0.699
Product Design	0.628
Price	0.719
Store Environment	0.852
Promotion	0.880

Descriptive analysis

The demographic profiles of the respondents are listed in Table: 2. Frequencies and percentage are calculated for each variable- age, education, marital status, income, purchase frequency and recommendation by others. The age of the respondents were classified into three groups: youngsters (21-30), middle age (31-40) and upper middle age (above 40). Most of the respondents 75.8% fall under the first category. The educational qualification was categorized into four groups: SSLC, HSC, UG and PG. About half of the respondents (56.7%) fall in pg category.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentage analysis

Demographics	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age				
21-30	91	75.8	75.8	75.8
31-40	7	5.8	5.8	81.7
Above40	22	18.3	18.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Education				
SSLC	16	13.3	13.3	13.3
HSC	14	11.7	11.7	25.0
UG	22	18.3	18.3	43.3
PG	68	56.7	56.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Marital status				
Unmarried	68	56.7	56.7	56.7
Married	52	43.3	43.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Income				
Below 25,000	98	81.7	81.7	81.7
25,001-35,000	7	5.8	5.8	87.5
Above 35,000	15	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Purchase frequency				
Monthly	53	44.2	44.2	44.2
Twice a month	29	24.2	24.2	68.3
Others	38	31.7	31.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Recommendation				
Friends	66	55.0	55.0	55.0
Family	23	19.2	19.2	74.2
Peer group	7	5.8	5.8	80.0
Others	24	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The marital status is of two categories- unmarried and married, in which the unmarried females confine to 56.7% of the total respondents. With respect to the income categories, there are three groups: low income group (below Rs.25,000), average income group(Rs.25,001- 35,000) and high income

group(above Rs.35,000). 81.7% of the respondents fall in the low income group, where as 5.8% and 12.5% in average and high income group respectively. The purchase frequency of 44.2% of the respondents is once in a month, 24.2% is twice a month and the remaining 12.5% buy whenever there is requirement. 55% of the respondents have gained the brand recommendation from their friends, 19.2% from their family, 5.8% from their peer group and the remaining 20% from other people such as dealers.

Table 3. Ranking of factors of brand loyalty

Factors	Mean	Rank
Brand Name		
The brand name is prestigious	3.742	
The brand name is similar to my personality	3.067	
The brand is popular	3.975	4
The brand name and image attracts me	3.312	
	Mean average 3.525	
Product Quality		
The brand has good quality products	4.492	
The brand has natural ingredients in its products	3.775	1
There is no complaints regarding the quality (allergy)	4.292	
The effect exists longer than the other brands	4.233	
	Mean average 4.198	
Product Design		
The brand has a wide variety of colors and shades	3.525	
The texture is easy for application	3.917	3
The brand innovates trendy and fashionable new products	3.717	
The brand unique products that suits different skin types	4.208	
	Mean average 3.842	
Price		
The brand is selected regardless of price	3.942	
The brand product is worthy for the price	4.267	2
The brand provides value for money	4.083	
The price increase will not stop me from purchasing this brand	4.325	
	Mean average 4.154	
Store Environment		
The brand's product is available at all stores	3.625	
The product arrangement in the shelves is easy to identify	3.350	6
The store environment is pleasant and peaceful	3.400	
The sales person provides sufficient information about the products	2.992	
	Mean average 3.342	
Promotion		
The Ads of the brand are attractive	3.500	
The Ads keep reminding me about the brand always	3.383	5
The Ads influence me to purchase this brand	3.217	
The Ads influence me to switch from other brands to this brand	3.658	
	Mean average 3.434	

Factors of Brand Loyalty

The mean score for each factor of the brand loyalty is calculated from the data collected from the respondents. There are four items per construct compiling twenty four items in the questionnaire with respect to factors. The mean value for each

factor is shown in the Table: 3. The average mean for Brand name is 3.525, product quality is 4.198, product design is 3.842, price is 4.154, store environment is 3.342 and promotion is 3.434. This shows that product quality has the highest mean of 4.198 and ranks first among all the variables. This is followed by price (4.154), product design (3.842), brand name (3.525), promotion (3.434) and finally, store environment (3.342). This ranking is purely based on the data collected from the respondents.

One way Anova

One way Anova is a test that is used to compare the means of more than two sets of data. Here, the researcher has aimed at comparing the means of three age groups: youngsters, middle age and upper middle aged females. The results are shown in the Table: 4 which indicate that there are four significant factors considered for brand loyalty, which are, brand name, product quality, product design and price. Among the three groups, the middle aged females contribute more towards the brand name factor of brand loyalty than others. Similarly, Table: 5 shows the result of comparison of means of three income groups, in which it is indicated that there are four significant variables: brand name, product quality, product design and promotion. The average income group contributes more to the brand name factor of brand loyalty than others. In case of product quality all the three groups are contributing almost in high mean values, especially the upper age group of consumers, which justifies that all the consumers are considering quality as the most important factor for brand loyalty.

Hypothesis test

As shown in Table: 6, the findings reveal that brand name, product quality, product design, price and promotion have significant relationship with brand loyalty, whereas there is no significant relationship is found between store environment and brand loyalty. This means that all the hypothesis: H1, H2, H3, H4 and H6 are accepted while H5 is rejected. The female consumers of Tirunelveli city are considering these factors while deciding up on the loyalty towards a particular brand. The highest positive correlation value for product quality (0.791) shows that it is the most important factor among all, which means, the consumers are more concerned about the quality of the products which may include the functional, feel, texture, ease of use and other aspects. Promotion is the least considered factor for brand loyalty with 0.261 as the correlation value.

DISCUSSION

As indicated in Table: 1, cosmetics are widely used by youngsters, may be due to the reasons such as beauty conscious, personality development, confidence and health care purposes. The majority of the respondents fall under the income category below Rs.25,000. This may be due to the reason that most of the respondents are youngsters. The majority of the respondents have mentioned as single or unmarried in their marital status, which again complements that the majority consumers are youngsters. The purchase frequency of the sample respondents is mainly once in a month, and there are persons who buy cosmetics when there is requirement. Almost 55% of respondents are turned to buy a particular brand by the influence of friends rather than the impact of family, peer group or dealers, since youngsters do not have much exposure towards peer group or dealers. Word of mouth plays a major role in brand loyalty and so it is evident for the cosmetics to satisfy and retain their existing customers and to avoid activities that may cause a negative impact spreading through word of mouth.

Table 4. Age versus factors of brand loyalty

	Brand Name	Product Quality	Product Design	Price	Store environment	Promotion
Significant value	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.277	0. 156
Mean						
21-30	13.6484	16.4176	15.1429	16.7363	14.3297	12.8571
31-40	18.0000	16.0000	16.0000	15.0000	10.0000	18.0000
Above 40	14.7273	18.5909	16.0909	16.6364	10.4545	10.6818
Total	14.1000	16.7917	15.3667	16.6167	13.3667	12.7583

Table 5. Income versus factors of brand loyalty

	Brand Name	Product Quality	Product Design	Price	Store environment	Promotion
Significant value	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.167	0. 277	0.000
Mean						
Below 25,000	13.9592	16.6020	15.3469	15.3469	13.5918	13.0816
25,001-35,000	18.0000	16.0000	16.0000	16.0000	10.0000	18.0000
Above 35,000	13.2000	18.4000	15.2000	15.2000	13.4667	8.2000
Total	14.1000	16.7917	15.3667	15.3667	13.3667	12.7583

Table 6. Significance of brand loyalty with its factors

Factors	Pearson correlation	Sig. value (2tailed)	Result
Brand Name	0.432	0.026	Accept H1
Product Quality	0.791	0.036	Accept H2
Product Design	0.588	0.032	Accept H3
Price	0.543	0.017	Accept H4
Store Environment	0.174	0.069	Reject H5
Promotion	0.261	0.041	Accept H6

Now-a-days, consumers are more concerned about the quality of product while purchasing any kind of product. Cosmetics, being a sensitive case which may lead to negative impact on skin or hair or any allergic reactions, consumers have a bird's eye view regarding the quality of product. Also, consumers are more concerned about the current trend and fashion, prevailing in their locality. Moreover, consumers of South India are traditional and price sensitive compared to other parts of the world. Hence, if they are highly satisfied with the product quality (Mean: 4.2, Rank:1) and design, at the right price, consumers are ready to purchase the same brand that creates loyalty. The promotion are least considered comparatively to other factors.

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